FEUDAL SOCIAL FORMATION IN EARLY INDIA

By the same author

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Feudal Social Formation In Early India

Edited by
D.N. JHA

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Preface

Whether or not the social formation in pre-colonial India can be characterized as feudal has been one of the major issues of debate in the current historiography. Some orthodox Indian Marxist historians have put forward the hypothesis of Indian feudalism whose beginnings have been traced to the early centuries of the Christian era. They have, however, been contested by several traditional historians who take pride in projecting an unchanging image of India and whose writings do not rise above the level of antiquarianism. Opposition to orthodox Marxist position has also come from some younger radical historians who, instead of identifying elements of change in Indian society, subscribe to such trendy theories as lend support to the imperialist perception of Indian society as static. In the first category of critics of early Indian feudalism some have good knowledge of primary source material but all are allergic to the Marxist theory. The second category of opponents to Indian feudalism consists of historians who have often shown regard for Marxism but not for the primary data on which early Indian history has to be reconstructed. The present volume of articles, restating by and large the Marxist position in support of Indian feudalism, seeks to meet the criticisms made by both categories of scholars.

The articles included in this anthology are written by different scholars and have appeared, with the exception of those by D.D. Kosamti, over a period of nearly two decades in various publications. Some changes, therefore, have been introduced to the original to minimize, as for as possible, the diversity of spelling and documentation, without interefering with the style of the individual contributor.

I wish to thank Professor B.D. Chattopadhyaya and Professor K.M. Shrimali with whom I discussed the plan of the present volume. Dr. B.P. Sahu, Shri Anil Chauhan and Shri Prakash Narayan deserve my thanks for their help and advice in course of the preparation of its press copy, though I own full responsibility for errors that may have crept into it.

My thanks are also due to the editors of books and journals for permission to reproduce the articles. Specific acknowledgements have been made at appropriate places in the book.

Lastly, I should like to thank Dr Akhileshwar Jha for expeditiously seeing the book through the press.

Delhi **D.N. Jha**
January 1987

Abbreviations

ABORI	*Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*
ĀP	*Ādi Parva*
ARE	*Annual Report of Epigraphy*
ARMAD	*Annual Report Mysore Archaeological Department*
BORI	*Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*
CII	*Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*
EC	*Epigraphia Carnatica*
EI	*Epigraphia Indica*
IA	*Indian Antiquary*
IESHR	*Indian Economic and Social History Review*
IF	R. S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism*
IHQ	*Indian Historical Quarterly*
IHR	*Indian Historical Review*
JAHRS	*Journal of Andhra Historical Research Society*
JAOS	*Journal of American Oriental Society*
JASB	*Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*
JBBRAS	*Journal of the Bombay Branch of Royal Asiatic Society*
JBORS	*Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society*
JBRS	*Journal of Bihar Research Society*
JESHO	*Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient*
JIH	*Journal of Indian History*
JNSI	*Journal of Numismatic Society of India*
JPS	*Journal of Peasant Studies*
JRAS	*Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*
KI	*Karnataka Inscriptions*
PIHC	*Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*
SCNI	B. N. S. Yadav, *Society and Culture of Northern India in the Twelfth Century*

Select Inscriptions	D. C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions bearing on Indian History and Civilization, I*
SII	*South Indian Inscriptions*
SP	*Sānti Parva*
TAS	*Travancore Archaeological Series*

List of Contributors

1. Devangana Desai
   Art Historian
   1/30 Shanti
   19 Pedder Road
   Bombay
2. Amalendu Guha
   Professor
   Centre for Studies in
   Social Sciences
   Calcutta
3. Noboru Karashima
   Professor of South Asian
   History
   Tokyo University
4. Valuthat Kesavan
   Lecturer in History
   Mangalore University
5. (Late) D. D. Kosambi
   Eminent Mathmatician
   and Indologist of Pune
6. R. N. Nandi
   Reader in History
   Patna University
7. M. G. S. Narayanan
   Professor of History
   Calicut University

8. R. S. Sharma
   Professor of History
   (Retired)
   Delhi University

9. Y. Subbarayalu
   Professor of Epigraphy
   Tamil University
   Thanjavur (Tamil Nadu)
10. M. R. Tarafdar
    Department of Islamic
    History and Culture
    University of Dacca
    Dacca (Bangaladesh)
11. B. N. S. Yadava
    Professor of Ancient
    Indian History (Retired)
    University of Allahabad

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INTRODUCTION

1

D.N. JHA

Introduction

Although Marx wrote on Indian history, his influence on Indian historical scholarship cannot be traced back earlier than the forties of the present century. It showed explicitly in the writings of B.N. Datta. As a young revolutionary in exile, he visited Moscow in 1921 and came into contact with the world communist movement. Taking a long view of the socio-economic developments throughout the ancient period, he spoke at length of the class struggle in ancient India and of the growth of feudalism.[1] Close on his heels came S.A. Dange, one of the founders of the communist movement in India, who sought to prove the emergence of the slave society in the later Vedic period on the basis of the material cleverly collected from the Vedic texts.[2]

Datta and Dange wrote at a time when both Indian intelligentsia and the British imperialism, under whose tutelage the former was reared, dreaded Marxism. Hence one would vainly expect any academic recognition for Marxists. Both Datta and Dange were also handicapped by the lack of academic training and the limited availability and knowledge of the source material. Not surprisingly they often interlarded their conjectures with quotations from Marx and Engels resulting in what would now appear to be a crude and schematic application of Marxism to early Indian history. Although most of their conclusions do not stand scrutiny, they are the first to have viewed early Indian society as a changing one and to have attempted an explanation of historical developments in terms that are not peculiar to India but are of somewhat universal application.

The preoccupation of the Indian Marxists with the problems of change and continuity in our early society has often led them to reject even some of Marx's own ideas on Asian/Indian history. Thus writing in the fifties D.D. Kosambi for the first time expressed reservations about Marx's concept of Asiatic Mode of Production (hereafter AMP). As we are aware, Marx and Engels never clearly formulated the paradigm of AMP but only made scattered references to its components such as state-controlled irrigation, absence of private property in land, autarkic villages, absence of towns, etc., so as to explain the phenomenon of Oriental despotism and often expressed divergent views on their relative importance.[3] Even so there runs through Marx's idea of the AMP the concept of a society characterized by tribal communal ownership of land and a self-sustaining economy based on an agriculture-handicrafts *connubium* and hence marked by a "stagnatory" and "vegetative life" and a "tremendous staying power".

The notion of "the unchangeableness of Asiatic societies" and that of the Oriental despotism, both derived from the concept of AMP, have, however, been seriously questioned by Indian historians. The myth of millenary stagnation of early Indian society has been ably exploded by D.D. Kosambi and R.S. Sharma[4] who mark definite stages in the development of its social polity till the beginning of feudalism from about the middle of the first millennium. Neither of them accepts the scheme implicit in the AMP which would appear both inadequate and invalid if subjected to the modes of proof particular to the Marxist theory. Recent researches have shown that the concept of AMP does not correspond to the early Indian situation which is marked by the existence of private property in land and of a ruling class around the king which expropriated the surplus from the masses.[5] Systematic studies of the archaeological material, likewise, have proved the existence of many towns, and several phases of urbanization have been postulated in different parts of the country.[6] All this has led to a rejection of the AMP paradigm by the Indian Marxist historians, who have tried to apply the basic tenets of historical materialism to the study of early Indian social formation.[7]

The theoretical emancipation of Indian historians from Marx's loosely knit construct of the AMP initially led some of them to accept the Marxist periodization of European history as a hypothesis for the analysis of the historical evidence[8] without any procrustean adherence to it. Thus as early as 1950 Kosambi argued against the mechanical application of Marx's scheme of periodization to the history of India and asserted that Marxism is a tool of analysis and not a substitute for thinking. In view of the fact that India is a very large country with the utmost diversity of natural environment, language and historical course of development, he said, neither in the means of production nor in the stages of development can one think of an overall homogeneity in the oldest times.[9] European parallels therefore may not always be a useful guide in reconstructing the history of India where course of developments was different in many ways. The general reluctance of Indian Marxist historians to look for one-to-one correspondence between historical developments in India and Europe[10] has, however, not led to a total rejection by them of what may seem common to both. This is evident from the fact that they have been basically concerned with the process of social change manifesting itself in diverse ways[11] and that it is from this vantage point that they have analysed the early medieval situation which they have characterized as feudal.

Although the first Indian Marxist historian to refer clearly to the growth of feudalism in early India was B.N. Datta,[12] it is only in post-Independence period that the discussion of the problem gained momentum as is evident from the writings of D.D. Kosambi and R.S. Sharma, who in spite of their rejection of the idea of self-sufficiency implied in the AMP, agree that by the end of the Gupta period the Indian village became nearly self-contained owing mainly to the decline of trade and urban life. The simple structure of the closed peasant economy, Kosambi seems to believe, was disturbed during the early centuries of the Christian era when the kings began to transfer their fiscal and administrative rights over land to their subordinate chiefs who thus came into direct relation with the peasantry, a process he terms "fedualism from above". It reached an advanced stage of development during the period of the Guptas and Harṣa. Kosambi holds that at a later stage "a class of landowners developed within the village between the state and the peasantry, gradually to wield armed power on the local population"—a process he calls "feudalism from below".[13] Sharma does not apparently join issue with Kosambi but produces evidence which contradicts the two-stage theory of Indian feudalism.[14] According to him, feudalism in India, unlike in Europe, began with the land grants made to brāhmaṇas, temples and monasteries for which the epigraphic evidence begins from the first century B.C. and multiplies by Gupta times when villages together with their fields and inhabitants, with fiscal, administrative and judicial rights (with the right to enjoy fines received) and with exemption from the interference of royal officials were given to religious beneficiaries. What was abandoned step by step to the priestly class was later given to the warrior class. Religious as well as secular (service) grants became increasingly popular with the emergence of local and self-sufficient economies marked by lack of commercial intercourse, decline of urban life and paucity of coins. The growth of feudal property in India came to be linked with the undermining of the communal rights in land, as is evident from the later grants which refer to the transfer of the communal resources (e.g., pastures, forests, water reservoirs, fisheries, etc.) to the beneficiaries. The economic essence of Indian feudalism, like that of European, it has been argued, lay in the rise of landed intermediaries leading to the enserfment of the peasantry through restrictions on peasant mobility and freedom, increasing obligation to perform forced labour (*viṣṭi*), mounting tax burdens and the evils of subinfeudation.[15] The crucial elements in Sharma's chain of earlier arguments is the premise that there took place around the middle of the first millennium A.D. a decline in urban commodity production and foreign trade resulting in the growth of a self-sufficient economy in which metallic currency became relatively scarce and hence all payments (whether to priests or to the government officials) had to be made through assignment of land or of revenues thereform.[16]

Although the relative decline in commodity production and trade, the gradual paucity in metallic currency and the consequent growth of self-sufficient economy are borne out by evidence which has been reinforced over the years, it may not be easy to postulate a causal connection between them and the growth of the practice of making land grants, the emergence of the class of landed intermediaries and other feudal developments. Attention may, for example, be drawn to the work of B.D. Chattopadhyaya[17] who has listed 600 south Indian epigraphic references to coins of various denominations and whose inventory contains all references, with the exception of six or seven, from the post-ninth century period when the practice of making donations of land in peninsular India, as indeed in other parts of the country, became very common and certainly more widespread than it may have been in the preceding phase when we have evidence of gradual disappearance of metallic currency and of languishing trade. Also there has been in the past few years some realization of the theoretical weakness of the explanation of the feudal developments only in terms of foreign trade whose decline, to a large extent, depended on the factors external to the Indian situation.[18] To attach greater importance to foreign trade than it deserves (as indeed has been done by both Kosambi and Sharma) within the Marxist frame of analysis would imply that the ancient Indian society did not possess any built-in potential for change—a position implicit in the Marxist concept of the AMP.[19] Thus rejection of the concept of the AMP on the one hand and the acceptance of the idea of feudal developments on account of factors not directly related to the Indian context on the other give rise to an anamolous and contradictory theoretical situation. It is this theoretical impasse which has recently led to a rethinking on the part of the exponents of the Indian feudal model from the vantage point of the internal social contradictions with which such surface manifestation as the decline of trade, paucity of coins and the growth of closed economy would have to be largely linked. Thus it has recently been argued that a deep social crisis, reflected in the description of the Kali age in various epic and Purāṇic passages datable to the late third and early fourth centuries, was a prelude to the feudalization of Indian society.[20] Attention has been drawn to the fact that the Kali age is characterized, among other things, by *varṇasaṃkara*, i.e., intermixture of *varṇas* or social orders, which implies that the vaiśyas and śūdras (peasants, (artisans and labourers) either refused to perform producing functions or else the vaiśya peasants declined to pay taxes and refused to supply the necessary labour for economic production. A close study of the descriptions of the Kaliyuga indicates that this was a period of sharp social conflict and crisis, largely generated by a twofold social contradiction: the one between the brāhmaṇas and kṣatriyas on the one hand and the vaiśyas on the other; the other between the brāhmaṇas and the śūdras. This led to the weakening of the traditional brāhmaṇical social order and, in its wake, of whatever elements of slavery may have remained there.[21] Although there may be many dimensions to the social tension in the early centuries of the Christian era, from the economic point of view, one may legitimately ascribe it to the earlier method of extracting surplus from the producing classes and distributing it among the various sections of the ruling class. The solution of the sharp class antagonism therefore lay in finding out a new mechanism of surplus extraction. Thus the state gave up the earlier practice of collecting taxes directly through its agents and then distributing them among its priestly, military and other employees. Instead it now began to assign land revenues directly to priests, military chiefs, administrators, etc., for their support. In contrast to Vedic times when no land could be transferred without the consent of the clan and when the practice of land transfer was practically non-existent, the new situation enabled the king to grant land to the leading members of the community who thus became responsible for the appropriation and consumption of the surplus in the form of what may be described as feudal rent.[22]

Doubts may, however, be expressed about the validity of the above explanation of the transition to feudal society. The Kali age is described in almost all the early Purāṇas and even if we keep the medieval Purāṇas out of consideration, it is possible to identify at least three sets of Kali descriptions assignable to the third-fourth, eighth and tenth centuries.[23] Since most of these descriptions are conventional and repetitive their chronology becomes uncertain as also their value for historical reconstruction. No less pertinent is the fact that the *Kalivarjyas* (practices forbidden in the Kaliyuga), which are inextricably linked with the notion of Kali age, do not find place in any of the relevant Purāṇic and epic passages. They seem to have crystallized around the 11th-12th centuries. nearly half a millennium later than the earliest Kali description in the Purāṇas and the *Mahābhārata*, and were finally codified in the first half of the 17th century by Dāmodara in his *Kalivarjyavinirṇaya*.[24] All this indicates the necessity of a critical and rigorous examination of the relevant literary material. But it is not possible to dismiss the Kaliyuga theory out of hand; for there is considerable epigraphic evidence[25] to corroborate the earliest Kali description and to suggest that during the first half of the first millennium Indian society was really caught up in the throes of a crisis, a crisis severe enough to lead to a major social tronsformation.

The Kali explanation of the transition from pre-feudal to the feudal society in India should apparently be applicable only to the heartland of the country and to the areas where brāhmaṇical order was well-established enough to generate a social crisis. But the available epigraphic evidence indicates that the practice of granting land and the growth of landed intermediaries first began in outlying, backward and tribal areas. In Maharashtra it began in the second century A.D. and covered a good part of Madhya Pradesh during the fourth and fifth centuries. In eastern India (e.g. Bengal and Bangladesh) it became common during the fifth-sixth centuries. The spread of the practice may be seen in Orissa in the sixth-seventh centuries. In Assam it began in the seventh century and in Kerala in the eighth century. The areas where the land grant economy first made its appearance were, thus, on the periphery of the regions with firmly entrenched brāhmaṇical order and had nothing to do with the social crisis and decadence reflected in the idea of the Kaliyuga. The logic behind this, however, is not difficult to comprehend. There may have already been considerable pressure on land in the fully brāhmaṇized areas on account of the agrarian advance which was made during the rule of the Mauryas. Hence the practice of donating land or village began in regions where land was plentiful, leading to an unprecedented agricultural expansion in a situation of crisis generated by a sharp social conflict. It also led to the spread of the brāhmaṇical settlements and ideology in newer areas and thus facilitated the process of acculturation of the tribal population of India. Not surprisingly a direct transition from tribalism to feudalism has been postulated in some peripheral areas (e.g. Assam).[26]

The challenge to the premises on which the model of early Indian fedualism is based, has often come from such quarters as seem to be reluctant to recognize the elements of change in Indian society. Thus although the practice of land grants and the growth of landed intermediaries around the middle of the first millennium A.D. can also be appreciated against the background of the emergent self-sufficient economy, it has been wrongly contended that trade did not decline and coins did not become scarce in the centuries following the Gupta rule.[27] On the basis of the literary references to the donation of land and villages made by kings as early as Vedic times it has been argued that what has been described as Indian feudalism is not different from landlordism which may have been prevalent throughout Indian history.[28] Similarly, it has been asserted that there was no change in the pattern of land grants throughout ancient India.[29] Evidently such uniformed criticisms seek to project early Indian society as static and immutable and thus to perpetuate, perhaps unconsciously, the imperialist British historiographical clichê of the changeless East.

What has not been but needs to be adequately appreciated is the fact that the Indian Marxist historiography, opposed to the British view of Indian past, has used the west European model of feudalism to explain social change in India from the middle of the first millennium. This is based mainly on the assumptions of comparative historical method which furnishes new hypothesis and is nothing more than "a tool for dealing with problems of explanation".[30] Therefore Marxist writings have emphasized both the similarities and dissimilarities between the basic economic developments in Europe and India during the Middle Ages.

There has, for instance, persisted in Indian historiography, albeit implicitly, the thinking that the manorial system distinguishes European developments from Indian ones. The land of the *seignurie* (manor), though not ubiquitous throughout Europe, was divided into two parts, *demesne* and *manse*, each quite distinct but linked to the other by very close ties of inter-dependence.[31] The *demesne*, consisting of houses, farm-buildings, gardens, heathland or forest, fields, meadows and vineyards amounted to a large farm, cultivated under the immediate direction of the lord and his agents. The *manses* were small or middle-sized holdings cultivated by the lord's tenants who owed him various customary dues and, more important still, services, so that they helped in the cultivation of his *demesne*.[32] Basically a unit of seignurial taxation and, more often than not occupied by several tenant families, the *manse* was held by occupants (*socii*) who had to produce for the lord the required sums of money and the bushels of corn, the stipulated number of hens and eggs and days of work on the lords' *demesne*. Thus the *demesne* presupposed the existence of the *manse*. This linkage of the small and middle-sized holdings with big farms is often believed to be basic to the medieval European agrarian production in the first phase of feudalism and seems to have given rise to serfdom which is regarded as the central feature of the mechanism of surplus extraction. Serfdom thus was built into the manorial structure and has been equated with what has been described as the "structured dependence"[33] of the peasantry on the lords.

A comparison of the post-Gupta economic scene with the European picture, though made difficult by the nature of the Indian source material, shows that a donated village or land cannot be equated with the European manor.[34] In India the gifted area does not seem to have been divided into anything like *mansus indomicatus* and small-sized holdings to which serfs were attached. Thus the type of relationship and interdependence between the large-sized farms and small or middle-sized plots of land emphasized in the west European context seems to be generally absent in our country. Here instead of the serf-occupied *manses*, peasant families themselves became units of production and seignurial taxation and developed close economic ties of interdependence with the landlord. It may therefore be argued justifiably that production processes in medieval Europe were different from those in early medieval India.

While this obvious dissimilarity may be explained, at least partially, in terms of the contrasting lines to development of agrarian organisation in Europe and India,[35] the degree of importance attached to the manorial system itself is often due to the onesided character of contemporary documents which deal almost exclusively with it and not because it was a universal phenomenon throughout the continent. In fact, the manorial organization flourished only in certain parts of western Europe especially in northern France, while in other parts it was but partly developed or even unknown. Allodial estates survived even among some of the strongholds of the manorial system[36] And yet historians speak of feudalism in western Europe. The reason for this is to be found not merely in the existence of the manor whose structure gave rise to a specific form of production relation and a surplus exploitation mechanism called serfdom, but also in a generalized subjection of the peasantry in the regions where the organization of agrarian production was qualitatively different. It may thus be suggested that the hallmark of feudalism is not merely the "structured dependence of the entire peasantry on the lords" as a recent critic of Indian feudalism would have us believe[37] but also, and equally importantly, the different forms of its exploitation—immobility, forced labour, ever-increasing burden of dues, etc.—all arising out of the lord's superior rights in land, the evils of subinfeudation and the eviction of tenants.

If the similarity in the forms of exploitation of the peasantry in western Europe and India and not the presence/absence of the manorial structure is accepted as a valid basis for comparison between developments in the two regions, it may be posited, on the basis of epigraphic and literary evidence, that peasants and artisans were at times attached to the soil more or less in the same way as serfs were in medieval Europe. Judging from the epigraphic material, the practice seems to have begun in south India where a third century Pallava grant for the first time speaks of four sharecroppers who remained attached to a plot of land which was given away to the brāhmaṇas.[38] Gradually the practice came to embrace independent peasants. Thus a sixth century grant from the Bijapur district of an early Cālukya king of Badami records a grant of land along with, among other things, *niveśa* (house), which apparently stands for cottages in which the peasants lived. In Orissa and central India the practice seems to have begun in about the sixth century[39] when it appeared also in Gujarat. Although the practice of transferring peasants along with land may have begun first in mountainous and backward regions to meet the problem of the shortage of agricultural labour force,[40] it seems to have been fairly common in several parts of India around the eighth century, as may be gleaned from repeated reference to it in a Chinese account of 732 A.D.[41] Some Indian literary texts also give the impression that the practice came into wide vogue in the second half of the first millennium.[42] Although the correlation of the literary testimony with epigraphic evidence will furnish a clear picture of the chronological and geographical limits of the practice, it seems to have continued in certain areas even after the first millennium A.D. Several epigraphs from Karnataka and south India, for example, indicate that donations of land or village were often accompanied by transfer of peasants and artisans.[43] Recent research has shown that even where there is lack of clear evidence of making the cultivators stick to the soil in specific cases of land transfer, the general tendency was to impose restriction on their personal freedom and mobility.[44]

Whether or not restrictions on peasant freedom/mobility generated the same kind of social relations as was inherent in European serfdom, there is evidence to suggest that the inhabitants of the gifted village were often subjected to forced labour in the areas where they were made to stick to the soil —a fact which reminds us of the medieval European practice of making the villains work for their lord. Inscriptions indicate that *viṣṭi*, levied mainly from the slaves and hired labourers in the Maurya period, brought all classes of subjects in its ambit and by the fifth-sixth centuries it spread from Kathiawar to Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and south India.[45] Although north Indian inscriptions belonging to the dynasties of the Paramāras, Cālukyas, Cāhamānas, Gāhaḍavālas and the Candellas do not refer to the practice of forced labour, there are reasons to believe that it did not die out altogether after A.D. 1000. In fact, we have epigraphic evidence to show its continuance in Karnataka,[45] and its becoming fairly popular in most of the parts of Tamil Nadu during the Coḷa period.[47] Regional variations apart, *viṣṭi*, like serfdom, seems to have continued throughout the early medieval period and even later in India, though neither was presant at all places throughout the country. What, however, seems likely that here, compared to Europe, forced labour was less common. In other words, the incidence of labour rent, a prominent feature of European feudal economy, was possibly less in India—a fact which can be explained, to a certain extent, by the varying agrarian organizations prevailing in the two regions.[48]

Although the incidence of forced labour, which was the principal form of seignurial exploitation in European feudal economy, may have been comparatively less in India, being generally confined to areas which yield clear evidence of serfdom, the Indian peasantry was subjected to an ever increasing burden of rent in kind and to some extent, in cash. This is evident from a large number of land charters which provide often very detailed list of fiscal exemptions (*parihāras*) granted to the donees in both north and south India.[49] A Vākāṭaka record specifies 14 *parihāras* and states that the grant is accompanied by all kinds of immunities (*sarvajātiparihāraparitañca*).[50] Although most dues mentioned in the Vākāṭaka list may have been irregular contributions in the form of provisions, there is little doubt that the Gupta period saw the imposition of several new taxes (e.g. *udraṅga*, *uparikara*, *halikākara*, etc.). In the post-Gupta period, the Pāla records specify only a few taxes but leave clear room for the imposition by grantees of fresh imposts on the villagers. They repeatedly refer to the obligation of paying all dues (*samastapratyāya*) to the donee, who, in the absence of clear stipulation about each of them, could always extract more than may have been due from the peasants. Similarly, the Pratihāras transferred all sources of revenue (*sarvāyasameta*) often without naming them. What is more, in some of the Pratihāra documents from Rajasthan, the villagers were required to pay proper and improper, fixed and unfixed dues to the beneficiary[51]—a practice which is borne out later by the Candella[52] and the Gāhaḍavāla records.[53] The latter list as many as 15 taxes out of which one, *turuṣkadaṇḍa*, may have been levied in times of emergency and at least 10 appear to be regular taxes, not mentioned in earlier inscriptions.[54] The impression of an increasing burden of feudal rent during early medieval times is also supported by several contemporary literary texts.[55] In south India too, a similar trend is noticeable. Thus whereas the number of *parihāras* in an early Pallava charter is stated to be 18, the Valurpalaiyam plates of the time of Pallava king Nandivarman III mention as many as 22 of them as being granted along with the land to the god Mahādeva.[56] A recent study, based on the Tamil inscriptions of the Coḷas, shows that no less than 27 taxes were transferred to the donees in the heartland of their empire between the ninth and the 13th centuries.[57] The increased burden of rent in the Coḷa kingdom is also evident from the fact that one of the longest, if not the most exhaustive, lists of *parihāras* attached to a *devadāna* land is found in an inscription issued in the 8th year of the Coḷa Rājarāja I (A.D. 1012-44) where no less than 50 of them are enumerated.[58] Again, the number of revenue terms mentioned in the Hoysaḷa records is much larger than in the Coḷa epigraphs.[59] Thus, although our sources are too discontinuous, widely dispersed and unevenly utilised to give a precise idea of the amount of surplus extracted by the landed intermediaries, rummaging through the vast mass of epigraphic material one gets the unmistakable impression that the economic burden on the peasantry kept on increasing throughout the six or seven centuries following the age of the Guptas.

We have no means to ascertain whether or not the rise in feudal rent was owing to the agrarian expansion and the possibly resultant increase in agricultural production.[61] But there is little doubt that the collection of rent in India, like Europe, was often linked with the donees' right of subinfeudation and eviction. The available epigraphic material reveals that in several parts of north India (e.g. Malwa, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra) the practice of subinfeudation implying the right to eject the cultivators was well established from the fifth to the 12th centuries which may have led not only to an oppressive collection of rent but also to reducing the permanent tenants to the position of tenants-at-will.[62] The south

Indian epigraphs even provide actual examples of eviction of peasants from the land.[63] Though in the absence of an intensive region-wise analysis of land charters it is difficult to form a clear idea of the precise areas in which eviction was resorted to, it has been rightly argued that it may have been typical of the pockets which were settled and did not face any shortage of agrarian labour and presented a contrast to the thinly populated backward regions marked by the practice of attaching peasants and artisans to the land.

The oppressive rent was often accompanied by the gradual undermining of the communal rights over land in donated areas —a trend which is seen in various parts of the country throughout the second half of the first millennium. Already in the Gupta period, the Vākāṭaka grants begin to refer to the transfer of rights to the enjoyment of mines, hides and pasturage. But in the post-Gupta period the practice spread to eastern India, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat. This is clear from the Pāla and Pratihāra records which refer to the transfer to the donee of all agrarian rights such as the use of pasture grounds, fruit trees, reservoirs of water, bushes and thickets, forests, barren land, lowland, etc. Although in the absence of a detailed examination of inscriptions it is difficult to postulate that similar agrarian rights were transferred to the donees in all parts of south India, there is clear indication that in the Coḷa period communal ownership came to be weakened. A recent statistical analysis of personal names in 3543 Tamil Coḷa inscriptions thus indicates that the village community was being gradually deprived of its autonomy by the local chiefs and landed intermediaries.[64] It is likely that the weakening of the communal control over land in course of time may have reinforced the economic bondage of the peasantry.

It would then appear that from the Gupta period onwards the Indian peasantry was subjected to a surplus extracting mechanism which, apart from being different from that of the preceding period, manifested itself in various forms in different regions of the country. In backward areas where there was dearth of labour force, peasants and other producing classes were attached to the soil and were required to perform free labour service for the landlord; and although serfdom may not have struck deep roots the general restrictions on their mobility reduced them to the position of semi-serfs. In thickly populated areas they suffered the evils of subinfeudation, and living under the constant threat of eviction, were reduced to the position of tenants-at-will. In most parts of the country, however, they were made to pay to the lord an ever-increasing amount of dues in the form of rent. One can notice a degree of unevenness in the growth of these various forms of exploitation in relation to time and space, though one cannot doubt their existence at different points of time at various places during the first millennium and the early centuries of the second. Nor can one miss the clear resemblance between the forms of surplus-extraction prevalent in India and feudal Europe, notwithstanding the importance of production based on peasant household unit in the Indian situation, which apparently has given rise to the belief, even among some Marxists, that to study Indian society from the vantage point of European feudalism is a case of misguided application.[65]

In spite of the unassailable evidence of the subjection of peasantry to the landlords, recently in an attempt to present an alternative to Indian feudal model, it has been postulated that the ancient and medieval agrarian history of India was characterized by predominantly free peasantry which not only had 'complete' control over the means of production but also enjoyed autonomy of production because it controlled the process of production.[66] But the available data reveal that in early medieval times the theory of royal ownership of land became sufficiently strong so as to enable the kings/chiefs to make land or village donations on a large scale to priests and officers who, in turn, derived ownership rights from their benefactors. This led to the development of graded land rights and naturally minimized the possibility of ordinary peasants owning land. Similarly, the economic demands made by landed intermediaries, which is amply borne out by inscriptions, must have conditioned the process of agrarian production and militated against peasant freedom.[67] Ignoring all this, however, it has been contended that the free peasant production together with the high fertility of land[68] and low subsistence level engendered 'relative stability' of India's socio-economic system, thus ruling out any change in the "means, methods and relations of production" for two thousand years or so.[69] In this unchanging milieu the state is thought of as the chief instrument of exploitation to the total exclusion of landed intermediaries whose emergence as a powerful exploiting class is no longer in doubt. Except for the hydraulic factor which is not (or cannot be) emphasized in view of the high degree of importance attached to soil fertility, the perception of pre-colonial Indian society in terms of the free peasantry construct seems to be taking us remarkably close to the AMP, characterized, among other things, by changelessness, expropriation of the agrarian surplus solely by the state and the absence of intermediate classes etc. Based on a skimpy familiarity with the primary evidence, the effort to jettison the feudal model altogether fails to reckon with the logic implicit in the sources, and amounts to bringing in through the backdoor the concept of AMP and even legitimizing, under a radical camouflage, the perception of pre-colonial Indian society as stagnant.

Assuming then that the Indian society in later part of the first millennium was developing feudal traits, the basic question that arises is: Did the feudal mode of production in India have any built-in dissolvents or it underwent transformations only through external stimulus? The Indian Marxist exponents of feudalism have tried to show that the classical feudal system in most parts of India, particularly central and western India, tended to decline after A.D. 1000 when the progressive role of land grants in opening up new areas to cultivation was exhausted in Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Malwa and Gujarat. Forced labour, an important feature of feudalism, is not at all mentioned in the records of the north Indian dynasties like those of the Paramāras, Cālukyas and Cāhamānas which ruled after A D. 1000. though Pāla and Sena inscriptions speak of *sarvapiḍā* (which seems to include forced labour) and some Kalacuri records occasionally refer to *viṣṭi*. On the basis of the *Rājataraṅgiṇī* it has been argued that forced labour could be commuted by money-payment. The commutation of labour service into cash payment was possible, we are told, on account of the revival of foreign trade with the Arabs and the Chinese, resulting in the growth of internal trade and towns and the revival of money-economy[70] thuse disturbing the earlier economic self-sufficiency. While the available historical evidence does indicate an increased volume of both foreign and internal trade and the greater use of coins around and after A.D. 1000, it should not be forgotten that trade had not disappeared completely in the centuries following the Gupta rule.[71] The concept of a self-sufficient economy cannot and should not be visualized in absolute terms. It is a relative concept and so is the rise of money economy and trade.[72] It is therefore not possible to explain the growth and decline of a social system on the basis of trade. Moreover, although commercial and urban revival[73] and increased use of money seem to have become an all-India phenomenon, *viṣṭi* does not seem to have fallen into deseutude throughout the country. In Tamil Nadu, for example, the Coḷas, who had floursihing trade contacts with the outside world, issued a large number of coins and yet in their Tamil inscriptions alone we come across as many as 107 clear references to forced labour (*viṭṭi.*) [74] Thus it is difficult to establish a causal relationship between the growth of trade and the decline of forced labour.

It may be further pointed out that the developed phase of India's trade with the outside world in the two centuries preceding the Turkish conquest seems to coincide with the intensification of the practice of making land grants leading to the growth of landed intermediaries, thus severing the direct ties between the state and the peasantry, especially in south India where, in addition to the much larger number of land grants from the Coḷa period onwards, we have also evidence to prove that village community was fast losing its autonomy—a process which may have facilitated the rise of feudal property.[75] In Karnataka we have much evidence of trade and merchant guilds after A.D. 1000 side by side with the growth of landed intermediaries;[76] and in Kerala, where trade flourished throughout the Middle Ages and later, we notice the development of jenmi system only after A.D. 1000. In the face of the growth of landed intermediaries it is difficult to argue that restrictions on peasant freedom and mobility became less stringent. Moreover, those who maintain that commercial revival in the opening centuries of the second millennium was a major disolvent of the feudal system ignore the fact that it could have been no more than an external factor which played only a minor role, if at all, in transforming the classical Indian feudal economy and that in spite of growing trade feudal social organization continued to exist in many parts of the country even later, though changes within this system no doubt need to be studied in depth, lest the feudal model in the Indian context should degenerate to the level of a historiographical stereotype.[77]

The commutation of the labour service into money payments and the possible loosening of the restrictions on peasant mobility attributed to the phenomenon of trade, may be treated as symptomatic of a crisis first visible in the earliest descriptions of the Kaliyuga and later in epigraphic records, a crisis which inevitably generated and in course of time sharpened the social cleavage between the landed intermediaries and the peasants. The increase in the volume of rent without necessarily a corresponding rise in the productivity of land and the growing claims of greater rights over land by the rulers and the landed intermediaries[78] not only subjected the peasantry to utmost economic misery but also led to acute tensions between the peasants and their exploiters.[79] Yadava has thus drawn our attention to the literary evidence which indicates the antithesis between the ruling aristocracy and the peasantry and also to the oppression of the latter by the former,[80] leading to clash and conflict between the two. An important way of protesting against oppressive dues and services seems to have been that the peasants and ploughmen would either escape from the land or would become mendicants.[81] Sometimes they would even resort to mass desertion.[82] The *Yaśastilaka* relates a story according to which a few poor men who were subjected to forced labour eventually lost their lives when they along with others protested against their master.[83] It is quite likely that the peasants may have sometimes united locally not only for agricultural pursuits but also for protesting against oppression.[84] Not surprisingly, a text refers to a peasant leader who killed people and plundered not only their property but also that of temples.[85] In another text we are told that in the Kali age the masters will be greatly troubled by the organization of *bhṛtyas*.[86]

In addition to what has been stated above, we come across, during the second half of the first millennium and later, considerable testimony of actual historical instances of conflict which strengthens our impression that the feudal formation was marked by its own social contradiction, manifesting itself very clearly in the antagonism between the landed aristocracy and the peasantry. Thus the abortive rebellion of the Kaivarttas, earlier viewed as a popular revolt against the tyrannical ruler, has been interpreted as a formidable peasant uprising directed against the Pālas who subjected them to heavy taxes and deprived them of their plots of land given as service tenures.[87] Some of the Ḍāmara revolts in Kashmir referred to in the *Rājataraṅgiṇī* have similarly been taken to be in the nature of peasant movements.[88] Similarly a 12th century inscription from Ghazipur district (UP) records an ordinance issued by the landholders of a village in an abnormal situation created by the turbulent people, possibly peasants.[89]

Although inscriptions from north India do not provide much direct evidence of social conflict, those from the peninsular region furnish clear examples of peasant unrest and protest. If we leave aside a record of the Vākātaka Pravarasena II which has been interpreted as an evidence of conflict between ordinary peasants and other social groups,[90] earliest epigraphic testimony of tension in agrarian society is available from southern Tamil Nadu. Thus the Velvikkuti grant of the early Pāṇḍya Parāntaka Neḍuñjardaiyan (*c.*A.D. 767-811) speaks of the loss of the *brahmadeya* in the wake of the Kaḷabhra aggression and the Dalavaypuram plates of another early Pāṇḍya ru'er, Parāntaka Vīranārayaṇa (*c.*A.D. 862-907), clearly refers to the encroachment upon donated village by the śūdras.[91] In the case of Karnataka, it has been suggested, on the basis of an analysis of inscriptions, that conflict between the brāhmaṇas and feudal lords, between brāhmaṇa freeholders of neighbouring villages and between the peasant villages and the feudal lords of whose domain these villages formed a part, surfaced from the 12th century A.D. onwards.[92] The situation was not much different in Tamil Nadu where Coḷa epigraphs speak of a dancing girl throwing herself from the temple tower to establish the right of her relations to till the land assigned to her as *jīvitam,* a brāhmaṇa who committed self-immolation to establish the rights of the temple servants and of the temple guards who leaped into the flames of a fire to establish their rights over their *jīvitam* land assignment.[93] Instances of violent protests are also found in south Indian epigraphs of the Coḷa, and subsequent periods. A record of the time of Rājarāja III states that a riot took place in the fifth year of his reign when original records of land transfer were destroyed as a result of which the rights of individuals had to be decided according to actual possession of land.[94] Another inscription informs us that a riot between *Iḍangai* (left hand) and *Velangai* (right hand) groups took place in the eleventh year of Kulottuṅga, when the walls of the temple were pulled down, its treasure looted and idol removed.[95] Y. Subbarayalu, on the basis of some Coḷa epigraphs from the Tiruchirapalli district, assignable to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which saw the crystallization of the *Iḍangai* and *Velangai* social divisions, has suggested that the *Iḍangai* groups were the newly emerging peasants and their coming together posed a serious threat to the old peasants of the locality.[96] It is significant that in the fifteenth century we get indication of new alignments between the two groups. Thus according to the copies of an inscription dated 1429[97] found at Aduthurai (Perambalur taluk) and Kilpaluvur (Ariyalur taluk) the Right Hand and the Left Hand groups decided unanimously not to submit to any outsider even if the *pradāni* (the local Vijayanagara governor), the *Vanniya* (military people) or the *jīvitakkārar* (9 holders of official tenures) coerced them or even if the brāhmaṇa and veḷḷala *kaṇiyālaṛ* tried to oppress them in collusion with government officers.[98] These records have been taken to imply an open revolt by the lower peasantry against the landlords and the government—a revolt which seems to have spread in several parts of the Coḷa empire.[99]

Although literary texts or inscriptions do not provide many examples of peasant protest either in north or south India, it is striking that instances of both peaceful and violent resistance mentioned in the sources begin to multiply from the 11th century A.D. onwards. One may therefore imagine that in the first half of the second millennium the social contradiction between the landed aristocracy and the ordinary peasants, arising out of the increasing economic oppression of the latter as well as out of the scramble for control over agrarian resources, tended to become sharp. This may also have led to important changes in the socio-economic system and may be viewed as the internal dynamic of feudal society, though in the Indian context the role of such a factor is yet to be adequately appreciated.[100]

There is no doubt that during the last two decades or more the use of this conceptual tool has given a definite direction to the early Indian historiography and has generated an impressive amount of literature,[101] a major bulk of which is devoted to the study of specific regions, and, no doubt goes a long way in identifying and explaining the basic processes at work in the social and economic life of the people. While scholars have paid considerable attention to the emergence of feudal economy in specific areas within well-defined chronological segments, its possible linkages with changing social structure and with developments in the fields of literature, art, religion, law etc. have not been sufficiently researched. The study of these dimensions could greatly improve the efficacy of the feudal model for the study of our country's history.

The present collection of articles seeks to lay stress on those aspects of the feudal social formation which have received scholarly attention in recent years. All papers included in this volume, except the two by D.D. Kosambi, have appeared in print during the last 15 years or so when the idea of Indian feudalism has been at the centre of controversy in Indian historiography. These are written by professional historians who are well known exponents of Indian feudalism and have unquestioned mastery over the sources. These pieces, by and large, combine a Marxist perception of early Indian history with a deep knowledge of the primary data and therefore inspire great amount of confidence and present a sharp contrast to the historiography primarily concerned with building historical models in the air. Also, they open up new lines of enquiry and imply that the concept of Indian feudalism, far from being an historiographical clichê, needs further refinement and sophistication.

The work is divided into three sections, the first of which contains five papers. Two of them, by R.S. Sharma and B.N.S. Yadava, provide explanation of feudal developments in terms of internal dynamics of Indian society—an explanation which is different from, though not opposed to, the one which was offered in considerable detail by the former first in a paper entitled "The Origins of Feudalism in India" [*JESHO*, i, nos. 1-3 (1958), 297-328] and then in his book *Indian Feudalism* (Calcutta, 1965). The remaining three papers, by D.D. Kosambi, Amalendu Guha and N. Karashima, elucidate the process of transition to feudalism with reference to Kashmir, Assam and Tamil Nadu and may be treated as case studies.

The five articles which form part of the second section deal with changes in economy and social structure in the early Indian feudal society. In the first of these, R.S. Sharma, apart from reinforcing his earlier arguments, touches upon several new points relating to feudal transformation in early India, and, in the second, B.N S. Yadava deals with social bipolarities mainly on the basis of literary texts. The other three contributions are studies of data from specific regions. Tarafdar, on the basis of Bengal evidence, shows that the continuation of trade and the existence of a currency need not be contraindications of feudal developments. R.N. Nandi has collected substantial epigraphic evidence to delienate the lines of agrarian changes in the peninsular region, especially Karnataka, and provides instances of multi-tiered social conflict around the 12th-13th centuries. The class antagonism which seems to have become quite prominent in south India around the 15th century forms the subject matter of the paper written jointly by Karashima and Subbarayalu.

The essays included in the third and the last section of the present anthology focus on the developments in the ideological sphere and show how these were linked with or manifestations of feudal social formation in early India. D.D. Kosambi thus relates the development of the *bhakti* with the growth of feudal society, a point which is also emphasized by M.G.S. Narayanan and Veluthat Kesavan in the context of south India. R.S. Sharma has discussed the feudal context of the origin of Tantricism and Devangana Desai has undertaken a similar exercise in relation to early medieval Indian art.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1] *Studies in Indian Social Polity*, Calcutta, 1944; *Dialectics of Land Economics in India*, Calcutta, 1952. An indirect influence of Marxist ideology is also seen in A N. Bose, *Social and Rural Economy of Northern India c. 600 B C.—A.D. 200*, 2 vols, Calcutta, 1942-45.

[2] S A. Dange, *India from Primitive Communism to Slavery*, first edn, Delhi, 1949. For a critical evaluation of the book see D.D. Kosambi, "Marxism and Ancient Indian Culture", *ABORI*, xxix (1949), 271-77.

[3] Marx first spoke of Asian societies as representing a specific "mode of production" (Moscow, 1970), p. 21. More detailed analysis of the AMP is found in his *Grundrisse der Kritk der politischen Okonomic* (Berlin, 1953) and *Capital*. His views are also scattered in the series of articles dealing with contemporary developments in Asia and published in the *New York Daily Tribune*. S. Avineri, *Karl Marx on Colonialism and Modernization* (New York, 1969) is a compilation of Marx's articles and letters dealing with problems of Asian history and society.

The concept of AMP has been at the centre of Marxist debates concerning Asia for more than a hundred years, though it was banned by Stalin from public discussion in the Soviet Union. In the wake of the process of de-Stalinization since the midfifties there have been in evidence a renewed interest and a notable increase in the theoretical Marxist studies of the AMP as well as in the empirical analyses of particular historical societies outside Europe.

For different points of view on the AMP from Plekhanov onwards see Anne M. Bailey and Josep R. Llobera, eds, *The Asiatic Mode of Production: Science and Politics*, London, 1981. For a useful theoretical discussion of the AMP also see M. Godelier, "The Notion of the Asiatic Mode of Production in Marx and Engels", *Enquiry*, ii, nos 2 & 3, New Series (1965), 28-48, 76-102; Eric Hobsbawm, ed, *Precapitalist Economic Formations*, London, 1965, Introduction; R.A.L.H. Gunawardana, "The Analysis of Pre-Colonial Social Formations in Asia in the Writings of Karl Marx", *IHR*, ii, no. 2 (1976), 365-88. Marian Sawer, having analysed the intellectual and political history of the concept of AMP, has argued that it has stimulated "a new heuristic approach to Marxism as a theory of world history" and has strengthened the view that "history is to be regarded as *prima facie* open, and not as a closed and unitary process governed by innumerable general laws determining its movement towards a single goal" (*Marxism and the Question of the Asiatic Mode of Production*, The Hague, 1977). Lawrence Krader has viewed the AMP as part of the succession of historical processes which eventually led to the capitalist mode of production as their outcome and has postulated that it is the stage out of which all modes of European history develop and is thus misnamed: *The Asiatic Mode of Production*. Assen, The Netherlands, 1975, chapter VII. In spite of repeated attempts to revive the concept time and again outside India, Perry Anderson, on the basis of empirical data from India, the Ottoman empire and China, has asserted that the concept should "be given the decent burial that it deserves" (*Lineages of the Absolutist State*, London, 1974, pp. 462-549). Barry Hindess and Paul Hirst (*Precapitalist Modes of Production*, London, 1975, pp. 178-220) have contested the validity of the AMP construct on a purely theoretical level without reference to any specific historical society. More recently, speaking of the scattered references to the AMP in Marx's writings, Heinz Lubasz has remarked that "the whole topic is a paradise for devotees of textual exegesis" and that it "tells us little of value about Asia or, by extension, about the rest of the non-European world" ("Marx's Concept of the Asiatic Mode of Production: A Genetic Analysis", in Diptendra Banerjee, ed, *Marxian Theory and the Third World*, New Delhi, pp. 107-31).

[4] The writings of Kosambi, Sharma and Romila Thapar generally give an idea of changes in early Indian society. Specific mention of their following writings, however, may be made: Kosambi "Early Stages of the Caste System in Northern India", *JBBRAS*, xxii (1946), 33-48; idem. "Ancient Kosala and Magadha", ibid., xxvii (1951), 180-213; idem. "The Basis of Ancient Indian History", *JAOS*, lxxxv (1955), 35-45, 226-37. R.S. Sharma, *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India* (second edn, Delhi, 1968), chapters XVII & XVIII; idem. *Perspectives in Social and Economic History of Early India*, New Delhi, 1983, chapters 9 and 10. Romila Thapar's articles focusing on social change in early India have been compiled by her in *Ancient Indian Social History*, Delhi, 1978; cf. D.N. Jha, "Social Change in Ancient India", *Economic and Political Weekly*, xiv, no. 35 (1 September 1979), 1499-1500.

[5] R.S. Sharma, "The Socio-Economic Bases of 'Oriental Despotism' in Early India", presented at the seminar on Monarchy and Government—Traditions and Ideologies, XXX International Congress of Human Sciences in Asia and North Africa, 3-8 August 1975, Mexico.

[6] Several studies of early Indian urbanism have been undertaken in recent years. Dilip K. Chakrabarti, *Early Urban Centers in India: An Archaeological Perspective, c. 2500 B C—c. A.D. 300*, D. Phil. thesis, Calcutta University, 1972; idem. "Concept of Urban Revolution and the Indian Context", *Puratattva*, vi (1973), 27-32; idem. "Some Theoretical Aspects of Early Indian Urban Growth", ibid. vii (1974), 74-5; A. Ghosh, *The City in Early Historical India*, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, 1973; Om Prakash Prasad, *Towns in*

Medieval Karnataka, Ph.D. thesis, Patna University, 1979); Kameshwar Prasad, *Cities, Crafts and Commerce under the Kuṣāṇas*, Delhi, 1984; B.D. Chattopadhyaya, "Urban Centres in Early Medieval India: An Overview", in S. Bhattacharya and Romila Thapar, eds, *Situating Indian History: For Sarvapalli Gopal*, Delhi, 1986, pp. 8-33.

[7] D.D. Kosambi rejects the theory on the basis of the early Indian evidence: "The Basis of Despotism", *The Economic Weekly*, ix (2 November 1957), 1417-19. R.S. Sharma effectively argues against the theories of the AMP and Oriental Despotism in "The Socio-Economic Bases of Oriental Despotism", op cit. Among the Indian medievalists who have contested the AMP concept and its ramifications notable is Irfan Habib. See his following articles: "An Examination of Wittfogel's Theory of Oriental Despotism", *Enquiry*, Old Series (1962), 54-73; "Problems of Marxist Historical Analysis", ibid. iii. no. 2, New Series (1969), 52-67; "Classifying Pre-Colonial India", *JPS*, xii, nos 2 & 3 (January/April 1985), 44-53. For a critique of the AMP by a leading Indian modernist see Bipan Chandra, "Karl Marx, His Theories of Asian Societies, and Colonial Rule" *Review*, v (1981), 13-91. The only Indian scholar to openly cling to the model is Diptendra Banerjee whose following articles may be of interest: "In Search of a Theory of Pre-Capitalist Mode of Production" and "Marx and the 'original' Form of India's Village Community" in Diptendra Banerjee, ed, *Marxian Theory and the Third World*, New Delhi, 1985; "Marx, Kovalevsky and Medieval India" (mimeographed), presented at the Indian History Congress, XLVI Session, Amritsar, 1985. In his adherence to the AMP Banerjee ignores the entire corpus of empirical research on early India done by the Indian Marxist historians during the last three decades or so.

[8] S.A. Dange, op. cit.; S.A.Q. Hussaini, *The Economic History of India*, i, Calcutta, 1962.

[9] D.D. Kosambi, "On a Marxist Approach to Indian Chronology", *ABORI*, xxxi (1950), 258-66.

[10] For example, ancient Indian society, unlike the Greek and Roman, cannot be characterized as based on large-scale slavery. In India the place of slaves, whose surplus labour could be expropriated, was taken by the members of the śūdra or lowest varṇa in olden days. But while Kosambi's total rejection of the slave mode of production may be especially true of the Vedic period when the number of slaves was very small and could not have participated in production like their Greek counterparts, one cannot entirely rule out the existence of slaves engaged in economic production from the post-Vedic period onwards, as is evident from Devraj Chanana's analysis of the Buddhist literature, the *Arthaśāstra* and a few Smṛti passages [Chanana, *Slavery in Acient India*, English edn, Delhi, 1960; idem. "Ideological Aspects of Slavery in Ancient India", *Journal of the Oriental Institute*, viii (1959). Cf. Walter Ruben, ed, *Die Okonomische and Sosiale Entwirklung Indiens*, Berlin, 1959; for writings outside the Marxist framework see U.N. Ghoshal, "Slavery in Ancient India—A Study in India's Social

and Economic History", in his *The Beginnings of Indian Historiography and Other Essays*, Calcutta. 1944; B C. Law, "Slavery As Known to Early Buddhists", *Journal of the Ganganath Jha Research Institute*, vi (1948), 1-10; R C. Agrawala, "Position of Slaves and Serfs as depicted in the Kharoṣṭhi Documents from Chinese Turkistan", *IHQ*, xxix (1953), 97-110; L. Gopal, "Slavery in Ancient India", *JAHRS*, xxvii (1961), 70-89.] R.S. Sharma also seeks to argue that slavery was an institution of considerable importance and perhaps played a role in economic production in post-Vedic and Maurya times (*Śūdras in Ancient India*, second edn, Delhi, 1980, chapters IV and V; cf. B.N S. Yadava, "Some Aspects of the Changing Order in India during the Saka-Kushana Age" in B.G. Gafurov *et al*, eds, *Central Asia in the Kushana Period*, ii, Moscow. 1975, 123-36).

Thus although both Chanana and Sharma notice elements of slave society in early historical India, neither postulates the existence of a large-scale chattel slavery in Indian antiquity; the latter, in fact, has recently characterized ancient Indian society as a vaiśya-śūdra and not a slave society (*Śūdras in Ancient India*, chapter VIII). Outside India the problem of slavery has been a matter of continuing debate and even some Marxists have begun to argue that in most early societies slavery played only a restricted role in the economy as a whole and that the vast mass of labourers were in one sense or another "free": Robert A. Padgug, "Problems in the Theory of Slavery and Slave Societies", *Science and Society*, xl, no. 1 (Spring 1976), 3-27.

[11] One of the basic indicators of change in early India emphasized in recent years, is the process of acculturation between the *varṇa* society and the tribals living outside the pale of brāhmaṇical ideology—a process through which the agrarian village economy advanced over the tribal mode of life facilitating interaction between the two at various levels. From this point of view the following articles of D.D. Kosambi are of considerable interest: "The Basis of Ancient Indian History", *JAOS*, lxxv (1955), 35-45, 224-37; "Early Stages of the Caste System in Northern India", *JBBRAS*, New Series, xxii (1946), 33-48; "Ancient Kosala and Magadha", ibid. xxvii (1951), 180-213; "The Origin of the Brahmin Gotras", ibid. xxvi (1951), 21-80; "Brahmin Clans", ibid. lxxiii (1953), 202-8; "The Study of Ancient Indian Tradition", *Indica*, Silver Jubilee Commemoration Volume (1953), 196-214; "Living Prehistory in India", *Scientific American* (February 1967); "The Historical Krishna", *The Times of India*, Annual Number (1965): "Autochthonous Elements in the Mahābhārata", *JAOS*, lxxiv (1964), 31-44. Also see S. Jaiswal, *Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism*, Delhi, 1967; N N. Bhattacharyya, *The Indian Mother Goddess*, Calcutta, 1971; idem. *History of the Śākta Religion*, New Delhi, 1974; idem. *Ancient Indian Rituals and their Social Content*, Delhi, 1975; idem. *History of the Tantric Religion*, New Delhi, 1983.

The Marxist historians have not only paid attention to the actual working of the tension-ridden varṇa society but have also tried to correlate the technological and material changes with the formation of state systems, modifications in social structure, and development of new religions in certain nuclear regions: R.S. Sharma, *Śūdras in Ancient India*, Delhi, 1958; idem. *Material Culture and Social Formations in Ancient India*, Delhi, 1983; idem. *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India*, second edn, Delhi, 1965; idem. "Kushana Elements in the Gupta Polity", in B.G. Gafurov *et al*, eds, op. cit., pp. 117-22; idem. "Material Milieu of Buddhism", in Mohit Sen, ed, *Das Kapital Centenary Volume*, Delhi, 1967; idem. "Material Milieu of Tantricism", in R.S. Sharma, ed, *Indian Society: Historical Probings*, Delhi, 1974; R. Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History*, Delhi, 1978. The various aspects of the social formation in ancient south India have also begun to attract the attention of scholars. See, M.G.S. Narayanan, *Aspects of Aryanisation in Kerala*, Trivandrum, 1973; idem. *Reinterpretations in South Indian History*, Trivandrum, 1977.

[12] *Studies in Indian Social Polity* (Calcutta, 1944): *Dialectics of Land-Economics in India* (Calcutta, 1952). The word 'feudal' or 'feudalism', often traced to the *feos* occurring in Burgundian charters from about 881, came into a general use during the Enlightenment and the French Revolution when it stood for what appeared to be a body of irrelevant and obnoxious practices inherited from the *ancien regime*. It was, again, during this period that there took place a certain bifurcation in the meaning and uses of the word 'feudal' or 'feudalism'—a bifurcation which has persisted to this day in European historiography and has influenced historical writings elsewhere and to which attention has been pointedly drawn by David Herlihy (*The History of Feudalism*, New York, 1970, pp. xiii-xxi). Some historians have thus viewed feudalism as an agglomeration of institutions connected with the support and service of knights and as a system of law, government and of military organization, whose central feature would appear to be administrative decentralization. Indian historians have sometimes been influenced by this concept of feudalism and they have often used feudal terms to describe a situation of parcellized sovereignty. As early as 1923 H.C. Raychaudhari compared the *māṇḍalika rājās* of the time of Bimbisāra with the earls and counts of medieval Europe (*Political History of Ancient India*, seventh edn, Calcutta, 1972, p. 184). A.S. Altekar has spoken of the feudatories and feudatory states in ancient India (*State and Government in Ancient India*, third reprint edn, Delhi, 1977, pp. 302-8). D.C. Sircar refers to warriors of Karnataka serving the Cālukya and Raṣṭrakūṭa kings as "feudatory famililies" (*Studies in the Society and Administration of Ancient and Medieval India*, Calcutta, 1967, p. 142). T.V. Mahalingam has identified locally powerful warriors as feudatories paying tribute to the Pallavas in token of their vassalage (*South Indian Polity*, revised edn, Madras, 1967, pp. 313, 320-23). L. Gopal seems to equate feudalism with the *sāmanta* system prevalent in India in the second half of the first millennium: "On Some Problems of Feudalism

in Ancient India", *ABORI*, xliv (1963), 1-32. In all these cases the scholars seem to assume the existence of a decentralized polity as basic to feudalism.

As against the concept of feudalism as a system of government, the school of Marxist historians has equated the feudal phenomenon with a mode of production based on 'feudal rent' which subsumes the existence of a class of landlords (landed intermediaries), a basic class of producers (peasants) with a special connection with the land which, however, remains the property of the former, and of the overwhelmingly self-sufficient agrarian economy with little scope for the fiunctioning of a market system. The study of feudalism within this frame of reference focusses attention on serfdom and various other forms of constraints on peasant freedom. In India these aspects of feudalism have attracted the attention of historians like D.D. Kosambi, R.S. Sharma and B.N.S. Yadava who, however, have not remained uninfluenced by non-Marxist scholarship. Kosambi, for example, speaks of 'feudalism from above' as being the first stage in the development of feudalism in India—a stage which corresponds to the orthodox view of the phenomenon as a system of government. Sharma and Yadava emphasize serfdom, and immobility, subjection, economic bondage and unfreedom of the peasantry, and yet both devote considerable space to feudalism as a system of government: *IF*, chapters II and VI: SCNI, chapters 2, 3 and 4).

[13] D.D. Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, Bombay, 1956, pp. 275-6. For a critical assessment of the two stage theory of Indian feudalism see Irfan Habib's article in *Seminar no. 39: Past and Present*, New Delhi, 1957.

[14] R.S. Sharma, "A Survey of Land System in India *c*. 200 B.C. to A.D. 650", *JBRS*, xliv (1968), 225-34; R.S. Sharma and D.N. Jha, "Economic History of India up to A.D. 1200: Trends and Prospects", *JESHO*, xvii, pt 1 (1974), 48-80.

[15] *IF*, pp. 265-7.

[16] It has been held by sociologists that in circumstances of relative self-sufficiency exchange of goods often takes the form of gift and that such gift has far more than purely economic significance (Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*, London, 1954; Colin Renfrew, "Trade as Action at a Distance: Questions of Interpretation and Communication", in J.A. Sabloff and C.C. Lamberg-Karlovsky, eds, *Ancient Civilization and Trade*, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1975, p. 57; cf. Romila Thapar, "*Dāna* and *Dakshiṇā* as Forms of Exchange" in *Ancient Indian Social History*, pp. 105-21.

[17] B.D. Chattopadhyaya, *Coins and Currency System in South India*, Delhi, 1978, Appendix I.

[18] In the context of European feudalism the Belgian historian Henri Pirenne, writing between the two Wars, argued that the classical world was founded on the unity of the Mediterranean Sea and the flourishing trade which this unity made possible. In the seventh century, however, the Arab followers of Muhammad disturbed this trade as a

result of which Europe was thrown back on its own agrarian resources. In the new situation where money revenues were absent, Charlemagne began the practice of supporting his soldiers through grants of land, thus creating the new feudal state and society and giving birth to the Middle Ages. Pirenne's reconstruction of European feudalism has been seriously questioned by later historians and various viewpoints on his thesis may be seen in A F. Havighurst, ed, *The Pirenne Thesis: Analysis, Criticism and Revision* (Farnborough, Heath, 1958). There is a striking similarity between Pirenne's reconstruction of the origins of feudalism in Europe and the attempt of Kosambi and Sharma to explain the beginning of the phenomenon in India in terms of the decline of foreign trade and consequent growth of local self-sufficient economy, for which there is sufficient evidence.

[19] *Supra.*

[20] The theme of the Kali age was first touched by R.S. Sharma, *Śūdras in Ancient India* (Delhi, 1958), pp. 176, 213-4. It was further discussed by him in his *Ancient India* (Delhi, 1978), p. 169. For a fuller discussion of the Kali age as a prelude to feudal social formation in India see R. S. Sharma, "The Kali Age: A Period of Social Crisis", in S. N. Mukharjee, ed, *India: History and Thought*, Calcutta, 1982. Another historian who has shown interest in the transition to feudalism in B. N. S. Yadava: "Some Aspects of the Changing Order in India during the Saka-Kushana Age", B. G. Gafurov *et al*, eds, op. cit., pp. 123-36. Yadava has provided a detailed analysis of the concept of Kali age to explain the transition from pre-feudal to feudal society in India: "The Accounts of the Kali Age and the Social Transition from the Antiquity to the Middle Ages", *IHR*, v, nos. 1 & 2 (July 1978-January 1979). The idea of Kali age may be equated with that of decadence which seems to have prevailed in late Classical antiquity. For a percepient historiographical analysis of various aspects of the idea of decadence in Graeco-Roman antiquity see Santo Mazzarino, *The End of the Ancient World*, New York, 1966.

[21] B.N.S. Yadava "Some Aspects of the changing order in India during the Saka—Kushana Age", op. cit. cf. idem. "The Accounts of the Kali Age and the Social Transition from the Antiquity to the Middle Ages", op. cit.

[22] Marx never developed the concept of feudal rent as part of the concept of feudal mode of production which was only his secondary concern, but he did elaborate certain pre-capitalist forms of rent in order to illustrate the distinct nature of capitalist ground rent: See *Capital*, iii, Moscow, 1974, pp. 614-813. The Marxist position on feudal rent is stated by E.A. Kosminsky according to whom the feudal rent presupposes the existence of a basic class of landlords and of a special type of class of basic producers with a special connection with the land, which remained, however, the property of the ruling class of feudal lords (*Studies in the Agrarian History of England in the Thirteenth Century*, Oxford, 1956, p. vi). Also see Rodney Hilton, ed,

Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism, London, 1976, p 30. For a critique of the concept of feudal rent see Hindess and Hirst, op. cit., pp. 221-59.

[23]In the opinion of R.C. Hazra, the description of the *yuga-dharma* in the *Vāyu* and *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas* is assignable to A.D. 200-275 and in the *Viṣṇu P.* to the last quarter of the third or the first quarter of the fourth century A.D. (*Studies in the Purāṇic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs*, second edn, Delhi, 1975, pp. 1974-74). The Kali passages in the *Kūrma P.* are attributed to 'probably 700-800 A.D. (ibid. p. 178) and the *yuga-dharma* section of the *Padma P.* may be attributed to the first half of the eighth century (ibid. p. 183). The relevant portion of the *Matsya P.* is considered not later than A.D. 950 (ibid. p. 177) and that of the *Brahma P.* is assigned to ç A.D. 900-1200 (ibid. p. 187).

[24]Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra*, iii, 2nd edn, Pune, 1973, P. 930. For a detailed discussion of *Kalivarjya* see Batuknath Bhattacharya, *The 'Kalivarjyas'*, Calcutta, 1943.

[25]The first clear inscriptional reference to social crisis as envisaged in the earliest Kali descriptions is found in a second century Sātavāhana inscription which credits Gautamīputra Sātakarṇi as putting an end to the confusion between the four varṇas (*vinivatita catuvaṇasākarasa*, *EI*, viii, no. 8, l. 60). In the early Pallava charters Viṣṇugopavarman and Siṃhavarman are described as "always ready to extricate *dharma* that had sunk deep owing to the evil effects of the Kali age" (*Kaliyugadoṣāvasannadharmmoddharaṇasannaddho*, *IA*, v, 50-51; *vinivatitacatuvaṇasakarasa* *EI*, viii, no. 4 l. 10). Similarly the Talguṇḍa inscription of the early Kadamba king Kakusthavarman refers to Kaliyuga (*EI*, viii, no. 5, verse 4, l. 4, p. 34). The tradition of the Kaliyuga continued in later inscriptions as well. In the early Pāṇḍya epigraphs, for example, the evil effects of the Kaḷabhra phase reminded the brāhmaṇas of the Kaliyuga. The Velvikkuṭi grant of Parāntaka Neḍunjedaiyan describes the Kaḷabhra ruler as *Kali-araiśaṉ* (*EI*, xvii, no. 16, l. 40) and the Madurai inscription of Centan Arikeśari states that the ruler surmounted the Kali through the *mahādānas* (*EI*, xxxviii, no. 4, ll. 5-6). Also see: Rajan Gurukkal, "Non-brāhmaṇa Resistance to the Expansion of the Brahmadeyas: The Early Pāṇḍya Experience", *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, Annamalainagar, 1984, pp. 161-63; idem. *The Agrarian System and Socio-Political Organisation under the Early Pāṇḍyas c.A.D. 600-1000* Ph.D. thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 1984.

[26]Amalendu Guha has suggested that in tribal areas there may have taken place a transition directly from tribalism to feudalism. See his articles: "Feudalism in Early Medieval India: Some Comments", mimeographed paper submitted to the seminar on Problems of Social and Economic History of India, Advanced Centre of Medieval History, Aligarh Muslim University, 16-20 December 1968; "Tribalism to Feudalism in Assam: 1600-1750", *IHR*, i, no. 1 (1974), 65-76. Cf. Surjit Sinha, "State Formation and Rajput Myth in Tribal Central India", *Man in India*, xlii, no. 1 (1962).

[27] D.C. Sircar admits that in post-Gupta times there was "scarcity" of money but he exaggerates the role of cowries in trade transactions: *Political and Administrative System of Ancient and Medieval India* (Delhi, 1974), pp. 18-19; *Studies in Indian Coins* (Delhi, 1968), pp. 279-88. B.D. Chattopadhyaya, "Currency in Early Bengal", *JIH*, lv, pt 3 (1977), 41-60, recognizes the relative absence of coins in Bengal from the middle of the seventh to the thirteenth century, though like Sircar, he also thinks that cowrie was the basic element in the currency system of the region throughout its history. For a useful survey of cowrie currency, from literary and epigraphic texts see D B. Pandey, "Cowrie As a Monetary Token in Ancient India", *JNSI*, xxviii.

The hypothesis of paucity of coins has been further strengthened by the writings of L. Gopal (*The Economic Life of Northern India*, Delhi, 1965, pp. 101, 125-34 and chapter IX) and B.N.S. Yadava (*SCNI*, pp. 270-5, 281-3). Recent studies indicate almost total absence of coin-moulds in post-Gupta period: U. Thakur, *Mints and Minting in India* (Varanasi, 1972), pp. 161-3; K.K. Thaplyal, *Studies in Ancient Indian Seals* (Lucknow, 1972), Appendix C. What is true of most parts of northern India also seems to hold good of south India as is evident from B D. Chattopadhyaya, *Coins and Currency System in South India* (Delhi, 1978). Even so the hypothesis of the relative scarcity of coins remains largely impressionistic in the absence of any quantitative study the importance of which has rightly been underlined by R.S. Sharma, "Coins and Problems of Early Indian Economic History", *JNSI*, xxxi (1969), 1-8. For criticism of D.C. Sircar's view that trade did not decline in the post-Gupta period see R.S. Sharma, "Indian Feudalism Retouched", *IHR*, i, no. 2 (1974), 320-30.

In sharp contrast to the general currency situation obtaining in most parts of the country, the Panjab region has yielded a regular series of coins ranging in dates from c. A.D. 650 to c. A.D. 1000—a fact which may partly explain the lack of land grants in the area. But the inverse relationship between the currency in circulation and the land grants as a mode of remunerating priests and officers has still to be worked out on the basis of an areawise quantitative assessment of coinage during the second half of the first millennium.

[28] D.C. Sircar, *Landlordism and Tenancy in Ancient and Medieval India as revealed by Epigraphical Records*, Lucknow, 1969, pp. 32-8.

[29] D.C. Sircar, *Political Administrative Systems*, p. 32. For a discussion of the change in the style and contents of inscriptions from Bengal see Barrie M. Morrison, *Political Centers and Culturul Regions in Early Bengal* (Arizona, 1970), pp. 5-16.

[30] Marc Bloch was one of the most eminent historians to work in the genre of comparative history. His two articles entitled "A Contribution towards a Comparative History" and "A Problem in Comparative History, the Administrative Classes in France and Germany" in his *Land and Work in Medieval Europe* (London, 1969) give a number

of excellent and detailed illustrations of the use of the comparative method in practice. For an elucidation of the logic of comparative history see William H. Sewell Jr, "Marc Bloch and the Logic of Comparative History", *History and Theory*, vi (1967), 208-18.

[31] Marc Bloch, *The French Rural History* (London, 1966), pp. 64-77. Georges Duby, *Rural Economy and the Country Life in Medieval West* (Edward Arnold, 1968), Bk III, discusses in detail the working of the manorial economy and the kind of social relations it gave rise to. For a relatively recent treatment of the *demesne* economy with reference to Poland see Witold Kula, *An Economic Theory of the Feudal System*, London, 1976, pp. 421-75.

[32] *The French Rural History*, pp. 64-77

[33] Harbans Mukhia, "Was there Feudalism in Indian History?" *JPS*, viii, no. 3 (April 1981), 273-310.

Some non-Marxist economic historians have viewed serfdom in western Europe as "essentially a contractual arrangement where labour services were exchanged for the public good of protection and justice" D.C. North and R P. Thomas, "The Rise and Fall of the Manorial System: A Theoretical Model", *Journal of Economic History*, xxxi (1971), 778. As against this is the generally acceptable Marxist view of serfdom according to which it was an enforced transfer to the lord of the surplus labour or the product of surplus labour, and amounted to peasant subordination manifesting itself in various forms of peasant obligations in different areas at different times. Thus apart from the peasants' attachment to the soil, labour services would appear to be a basic feature of serfdom in the early phase of west European feudalism.

But one cannot take a static view of serfdom, which has to be viewed as a surplus-extracting relationship changing over time. Not surprisingly by the 12th century labour services tended to disappear as the main form of feudal rent and came to be replaced by new forms of seignurial exaction. Lenin attaches greatest importance to forced labour or *corve* in his analysis of serf-run economy: *Development of Capitalism in Russia, Collected Works*, iii (Moscow, 1976), 191-3. Marc Bloch traces the evolution of peasant subjection the chief form of which is labour service rendered to the lord: *The French Rural History*, pp. 102ff; "Rise of Dependent Cultivation and Seignurial Institutions" in *Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, i (second edn, Cambridge University Press, 1966), 235-90. Georges Duby underlines the importance of labour services at the beginning of the 10th century, though according to him the great estates were not making full use of the labour forces they were able to command: *The Early Growth of the European Economy* (London, 1974), pp. 87-8. But the general trend of the Marxist debate in recent years has been not to rigidly equate serfdom with labour services. For a recent restatement of the Marxist position see Rodney Hilton, ed, *Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism* (London, 1976), Introduction, pp 14-17.

[34] Harbans Mukhia is critical of R.S. Sharma for visualizing "the development in India of almost all components of west European feu-

dalism—serfdom, manor, self-sufficient economic units, the feudalisation of crafts and commerce, apart, of course, from declining trade and urbanisation" [Was there Feudalism in Indian History?", op. cit., p. 285] While it is unfair to blame Sharma for producing empirical evidence indicating similar developments in India and Europe, Mukhia himself is guilty of reading in Sharma more than his words about the existence of manor in India would mean. At one place in his *Indian Feudalism* (first edn, Calcutta, 1965, p. 74) Sharma says: "*agrahāras* or villages granted to brāhmaṇas bear *some resemblance* to manor, for in some cases the beneficiaries enjoyed the right of levying forced labour of all varieties on their tenants" [emphasis added]. Obviously what is being implied here is not the structural identity of the *agrahāra* and the manor but the similarity of a particular form of exploitation common to both. This is also the underlying assumption of Sharma's another statement: ". . . only villages donated to the brāhmaṇas could *perhaps* be regarded as such" (ibid. p. 271) [emphasis added]. Mukhia thus misconstrues Sharma's statements to prove his point. His lack of respect for the norms of historiographical propriety is, in fact, quite evident when, in the context of the decline of Graeco-Roman slavery, he speaks of its "increasingly uneconomic" character (*JPS*, viii, no.3, April 1981, 275) and cites, in his support, the testimony of M I. Finley (*The Ancient Economy*, London, 1973, pp. 85-87 cited in ibid. fn. 10 on p. 296) who seems to be arguing to the contrary.

[35] The pre-feudal western Europe provides ample evidence of the existence of large-sized farms (*latifundia, villa*) cultivated directly by their owners with the help of gang slaves, which were the precursors of the medieval manor (Perry Anderson, ***Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism***, second edn, London, 1975, p. 59.; cf. Pierre Dockes, *Medieval Slavery and Liberation*, London, 1982, pp. 48-114). In contrast to this, Indian references to big farms worked by slaves are few, confined mainly to the *Arthaśāstra* and the *Jātakas* and probably located in the middle Gangetic basin. This may explain the general absence of the manorial system in India.

[36] B.H. Slicker van Bath, ***The Agrarian History of Western Europe***, London, 1963, p. 40; Perry Anderson, ***Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism***, pp. 154-56.

[37] The perception of feudalism as based on the "structured dependence of the entire peasantry on the lords" (*JPS*, viii, no. 3, April 1981, 276; ibid. xii, nos 2 & 3, January/April 1985, 233) does not carry conviction if we take a comparative view of the typological variations of the feudal formation in different parts of medieval Europe; for it is based on the wrong assumption of the prevalence of the manorial system regardless of its spatial and temporal specificities. Cf. R.S. Sharma, "How Feudal was Indian Feudalism", op. cit., p. 33. *JPS*, xii, nos. 2 & 3, January/April 1985, 33.

[38] *IF*, p. 54. For a recent assessment of the relevant evidence by R.S. Sharma see his paper "How Feudal was Indian Feudalism?",

op. cit, pp. 30-33. When Mukhia asserts that on the question of serfdom R.S. Sharma takes 'ambivalent positions' (*JPS*, xii, nos. 2 and 3, 235), he evidently misses the point that the latter does not use the term 'serfdom' in the Indian context always strictly in the sense in which it is used in Europe where it characterized the structure of the manorial economy.

[39] *IF*, pp. 55-7.

[40] Ibid. p. 57.

[41] Ibid. pp. 58-9: R.S. Sharma, "Indian Feudalism Retouched", op. cit.

[42] For a discussion of literary evidence of restrictions on peasant mobility see B.N S. Yadava, "Immobility and Subjection of Indian Peasantry in Early Medieval Complex", *IHR*, i, no. 1 (1974), 18-27.

[43] Quite a few inscriptions from Karnataka and adjoining regions referring to grant of land along with houses or hamlets may be interpreted to indicate the transfer of inhabitants to the donee along with the donated land or village; *EC* (revised edn), i, 96; iv, ch. 232, 306; vi, Kr. 39, pp. 80. M. Liceria has discussed at length the prevalence of the practice of attaching peasants and artisans to the soil in Karnataka in *Social and Economic History of Karnataka c. AD 1000-1300*, Ph. D thesis, Patna University, 1972. Also see her article "Emergence of Brāhmaṇas as Landed Intermediaries in Karnataka (AD 1000-1300), *IHR*, i, no. 1 (1974), 31-4.

[44] B N S. Yadava, "Immobility and Subjection of Indian Peasantry in Early Medieval Complex", op. cit.; *SCNI*, pp. 163-73.

[45] Varāhamihira (6th century) for the first time refers to a section of workmen known as *viṣṭikara* or *viṣṭikṛt* (*Bṛhajjātaka*, 13 11, 18.18, 21.7, cited in B N.S. Yadava, "The Accounts of the Kali Age...", op. cit., p. 56. While Yadava has drawn our attention to the literary evidence of the use of forced labour in agriculture (*The Problems of the Emergence of Feudal Relations in Early India*, Presidential Address, Section I, Indian History Congress, 41st session, Bombay, 1980), the very fact that in a good number of inscriptions the right to *viṣṭi* is transferred to the donees implies that they may have compelled ordinary inhabitants to work in their fields. Cf. G.K. Rai, "Forced Labour in Ancient and Early Medieval India", *IHR*, iii, no. 1 (1976), 16-42; idem. *Involuntary Labour in Ancient India*, Allahabad, 1981, chapters 4 and 5.

[46] *EC* (revised edn), i, 87; Y 1.13, 163; vi, Kr. 39.

[47] N. Karashima and B. Sitaraman, "Revenue Terms in Chola Inscriptions", *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 5 (1972), 87-117.

[48] See note 35 above.

[49] Oppressive taxation appears to be an important feature of the Kaliyuga: R.S. Sharma, "The Kali Age...", op. cit.

[50] D.N. Jha, *Revenue System in Post-Maurya and Gupta Times* (Calcutta, 1967), pp. 129-30.

[51] *IF*, p. 265.

[52] *SCNI*, p. 290.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid.

[55] This is evident from Yadava's discussion of the evidence from the *Lekhapaddhati*, *Prabandhacintāmaṇi*, *Ras Mālā*, *Prabandhakośa* and other texts: *SCNI*, pp. 294-5.

[56] D.N. Jha, "Temples As Landed Magnates in Early Medieval South India (*c.* AD 700-1300)" in R.S. Sharma, ed, *Indian Society: Historical Probings* (Delhi, 1974), p. 212.

[57] N. Karashima and B. Sitaraman, op. cit., p. 91.

[58] D.N. Jha, "Temples As Landed Magnates...", op. cit., p. 212.

[59] J.D.M. Derrett, *The Hoysaḷas*, London, 1957, pp. 193-202.

[60] The computation of the rate of exploitation of the peasantry in feudalism has been attempted by several historians and R. Rodolsky, "The Distribution of the Agrarian Product in Feudalism", *Journal of Economic History*, xi, no. 3 (Summer 1951), 247-65, discusses the various approaches to the problem. The efforts in this direction have been hitherto largely inhibited by the lack of adequate quantitative material: G. Duby, "The Manor and the Peasant Economy", in his *The Chivalrous Society* (London, 1977), pp. 186-8. In the case of early India the absence of quantitative data is felt more acutely and at the present state of our research one cannot venture to present anything more than an impressionistic picture of peasant exploitation.

[61] It is quite probable that the ever increasing number of land grants led to the extension of agriculture in various parts of the country. Attention has also been drawn to the introduction of several new crops on the basis of some early medieval texts, notably *Kṛṣiparāśara*: *IF*, pp. 251-3; L. Gopal, "Techniques of Agriculture in Early Medieval India (*c.* 700-1200 A.D.)", *University of Allahabad Studies* (1963-64), pp. 1-37. B.D. Chattopadhyaya has similarly indicated the increasing importance of *araghaṭṭa* and its possible role in augmenting agricultural production: "Irrigation in Early Medieval Rajasthan", *JESHO*, xvi, pts 2-3 (1973), 298-316. But in the absence of any systematic study of early Indian agricultural history it is difficult to establish a definite correlationship between agrarian production and feudal rent.

[62] *IF*, p. 266.

[63] D.N. Jha, "Temples As Landed Magnates...", op. cit., pp. 212-3.

[64] N. Karashima and Y. Subbarayalu, "A Statistical Study of Personal Names in Tamil Inscription", *Computational Analysis of Asian and African Languages*, no. 3 (March 1976), p. 15; also see Karashina *et al.*, *A Concordance of the Names in the Coḷa Inscriptions*, i, Madurai, 1978, Appendix 3. Karashima, "Allur and Isanamangalam", *IESHR*, ii (1965), 150-1. Cf. T.V. Mahalingam, "Village Communities

in South India", *Transaction of the Archaeological Society of South India*, i (1955), 33-46.

[65] In the writings of Karl Marx, feudalism, unlike capitalism, is not viewed as a world system or a universal phenomenon. But there is little doubt that historical research over the years has shown it to be a widespread social formation, notwithstanding the considerable variation in its precise forms in different countries. Thus although the closest parallel to fully developed European feudalism may be said to have existed in Japan, in other countries the parallelism may be less close: Eric Hobsbawm, "From Feudalism to Capitalism" in Rodney Hilton, ed, *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism*, London 1976, pp. 158-9.

[66] Harbans Mukhia, "Was there Feudalism in Indian History?", op. cit., pp. 273-310. The idea of free peasantry is not much different from the neo-populist Chayanovian concept of peasant economy which Burton Stein has applied to the study of medieval south India (*Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*, New Delhi, 1980), though Mukhia very recently seems to have lost his original enthusiasm for it as can be inferred from his statement: "I realize that the case (for the free peasantry) had probably been overstated, if unintentionally", *JPS*, xii, nos 2 & 3 (January/April 1985), 242. For a detailed criticism of Mukhia see R.S. Sharma, "How Feudal was Indian Feudalism?", ibid. pp. 19-43. Cf. D.N. Jha, "Relevance of 'Peasant State and Society' to Pallava-Coḷa Times", in N. Karashima, ed, *Indus Valley to Mekong Delta*, Madras, 1985, pp. 103-39, for critical comments on Stein's characterization of medieval south Indian economy as peasant economy.

[67] For a recent reappraisal of the relevant evidence see R.S. Sharma, "How Feudal was Indian Feudalism?", op. cit.; idem, "From Gopati to Bhūpati", *Studies in History*, ii, no. 2 (1980), 1-10.

[68] Mukhia's generalization that soil in ancient and medieval India was very fertile completely ignores the spatial and temporal variation and is buttressed with the help of a few mutually unrelated textual references to the harvesting of two or three crops, spread over two millenia (*JPS*, viii, no. 3, 303, fn. nos. 124, 125, 126 and 127). If one were to adopt Mukhia's method, it would not be difficult to produce far more substantial evidence of recurrent famines and drought to prove just the opposite point of view. Needless to emphasize then that the argument based on the supposed high fertility of land throughout the pre-colonial period of Indian history is misconceived. Cf. Stein, "Politics, Peasants and the Deconstruction of Feudalism in Medieval India", *JPS*, xii, nos 2 & 3 (January/April 1985), 57-8.

[69] Ibid. viii, no. 3 (April, 1981), 292.

[70] *IF*, pp. 242ff; *SCNI*, p. 287.

[71] L. Gopal, *Economic Life in Northern India*, chapters VI and VII.

[72] Marc Bloch, "Natural Economy and Money Economy: A pseudo-dilemma", in *Land and Work in Medieval Europe*, London, 1967,

pp. 230-44; M.M. Postan, "The rise of money economy" in *Essays on Medieval Agriculture and General Problems of Medieval Economy*, Cambridge, 1973, pp. 28-40.

[73] For commercial and urban revival in north India see *IF*, pp. 244ff; *SCNI*, pp. 275-84. V.K. Jain (*Trade and Traders in Western India* Ph. D. thesis, Delhi University, 1983) and B.D. Chattopadhyaya, ["Markets and Merchants in Early Medieval Rajasthan", *Social Science Probings*, ii, no. 4 (December 1985), 413-40] provide evidence of the revival of trade in western India. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri (*The Coḷas*, Madras, 1975; chapter XXII), G.R. Kuppuswamy (*Economic Conditions in Karnataka, AD 973-AD 1336*, Dharwar, 1975, pp. 110-18), and Kenneth R. Hall (*Trade and Statecraft in the Age of the Coḷas*, New Delhi, 1980) give an idea of the revival of commerce in south India. Om Prakash Prasad (op. cit.) speaks of urbanism in early medieval Karnataka.

[74] Karashima and Sitaraman "Revenue Terms in Chola Inscriptions", op. cit., p. 91.

[75] Karashima and Subbarayalu, "A Statistical Study of Personal Names in Tamil Inscriptions", op. cit.; Karashima, "Allur and Isanamangalam", op. cit.

[76] R.N. Nandi, *Growth of Rural Economy in Early Feudal India*, Presidential Address, Section I, Indian History Congress, 45th Session, Annamalainagar, 1984.

[77] In 1974 Amalendu Guha spoke of the transition from tribalism to feudalism in Assam during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: "Tribalism to Feudalism in Assam: 1600-1750", *IHR*, i, no. 1 (March 1974). Two years later N. Karashima's empirical study indicated the resemblance between the Vijayanagara *nāyakas* and the European feudal lords: "Nāyakas as Lease-holders of Temple Lands", *JESHO*, xix, no. 2 (1976). Both Studies, based as they are on the relevant primary source material, are dependable. It was therefore not 'a sleight of hand' that in 1979 the present writer had suggested the survival of feudalism in the later centuries of the Middle Ages: D.N. Jha, *Early Indian Feudalism: A Historiographical Critique*, Presidential Address, Section I, Indian History Congress, 40th session, Waltair, 1979. For more recent empirical studies of feudalism in post-thirteenth century period see N. Karashima, "Nāyaka Rule in North and South Arcot Districts in South India during the Sixteenth Century", *Acta Asiatica*, no. 48 (March 1985), 1-26; H. Kotani, "The Vatan system in the 16th-18th century Deccan—Towards a New Concept of Indian Feudalism" (ibid. 27-50). This particular issue of the *Acta Asiatica* contains two more articles dealing with later medieval Indian period and having considerable bearing on the question of later phase of Indian feudalism.

[78] *SCNI*, pp. 250ff.

[79] Yadava, "Problems of the Interaction between Socio-Economic Classes in the Early Medieval Complex", *IHR*, iii, no. 1 (July 1976), 50-1.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Ibid. pp. 53-4.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Ibid.

[87] *IF*, p. 268.

[88] Yadava, "Problems of Interaction between Socio-Economic Classes in the Early Medieval Complex", op. cit., p. 55; cf. D.D. Kosambi, "Origin of Feudalism in Kashmir", *JBBRAS*, Sardhaśatabdi Commemoration volume, (1956).

[89] *EI*, xxxii, no. 36.

[90] Raghavendra Vajpayi, "Socio-Economic Tensions in Bhojakaṭa Rājya of Vākāṭaka Kingdom in the Time of Pravarasena II", *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 45th session, Annamalainagar, 1984, pp. 139-47.

[91] Cited in Rajan Gurukkal, "Non-Brāhmaṇa Resistance to the Expansion of Brahmadeyas: The Early Pāṇḍya Experience", ibid. pp. 161-63. For a detailed discussion see idem. *The Agrarian System and Socio-Political Organisation under the Early Pāṇḍyas c. A.D. 600-1000*, Ph. D. thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 1984.

[92] R.N. Nandi, *Growth of Rural Economy in Early Feudal India*, Presidential Address, Section I, Indian History Congress, 45th session, Annamalainagar, 1984 Cf. D.N. Jha, "Relevance of 'Peasant State and Society' to Pallava-Coḷa Times", op. cit.

[93] N. Vanamalai, "Consolidation of Feudalism and Antifeudal Struggles during Chola Imperialist Rule", *Proceedings of the Second International Conference Seminar of Tamil Studies*, iii (Madras, 1968), 242-43.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Y. Subbarayalu, "The Peasantry of Tiruchirapalli District from the 13th to 17th Centuries", *Studies in Socio-Cultural Change in Villages in Tiruchirapalli District, Tamil Nadu, India* (Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo, March 1983), pt 1, 25-26.

[97] Ibid. 26-27.

[98] Ibid.

[99] Ibid. p. 128. Also see H.D. Raju Kumar, "Protest Against Heavy Taxation", *The Hindu*, 28 February 1978.

[100] In the case of late medieval Europe the role of class conflict in the long-term evolution has been stressed and Robert Brenner, "Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in pre-Industrial Europe", *Past and Present*, no. 70 (February 1976), 30-76, has argued that the crisis of European feudalism lay in the class relationship obtaining in the Middle Ages. For different views on Brenner thesis see *Past and Present*, nos 78, 79 and 80. A seminal contribution to the

debate, however, remains. Guy Bois, *The Crisis of Feudalism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984.

[101] Efforts have been made to explain the changes in early medieval Indian social structure, religion and art against the backdrop of a feudal social formation. See for example, R.S. Sharma, *Social Changes in Early Medieval India (c. A.D. 500-1200)*, Delhi, 1969; idem. "An Approach to Astrology and Divination in Medieval India", in H. Kruger, ed, *Neue Indienkunde* (Festschrift Walter Ruben zum 70, Geburtsag), Akademie-Verlag, Berlin, 1970, pp. 51-6; idem. "Material Milieu of Tantricism" in R.S. Sharma, ed, *Indian Society: Historical Probings*, Delhi, 1974; Yadava, *SCNI*, chapter 1; R.N. Nandi, *Religious Institutions and Cults in the Deccan (c. A.D. 600-1000)*, Delhi, 1973; Devangana Desai, "Art under Feudalism in India", *IHR*, i, no. 1 (1974), 10-17; idem. *Erotic Sculpture in India: A Socio-Cultural Study*, New Delhi 1975. R.S. Sharma has tried to identify the elements of change in various spheres of life and to relate them to feudal developments: "Problem of Transition from Ancient to Medieval in Indian History", *IHR*, i, no. 1 (1974), 1-9.

A number of area-wise studies of the early medieval Indian society undertaken in recent years further our understanding of the process of change even if the data have not always been discussed against the background of a feudal mode of production: P. Niyogi, *Brahmanic Settlements in Different Subdivisions of Ancient Bengal*, Calcutta, 1967; Kesavan Veluthat, *Brahman Settlements in Kerala*, Calicut, 1978; M. Momin, *Aspects of Political Institutions and Social Structure in Kamarupa*, M. Phil thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 1979; M. Santisri, *Brahmanical Settlements in Andhra Pradesh*, M. Phil thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 1980; K.N. Ganesh, *Some Aspects of the Agrarian Structure in Early Medieval Venad*, M. Phil thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 1979; Rajan Gurukkal, *The Agrarian System and Socio-Political Organisation under the Early Pāṇḍyas*, Ph. D. thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 1984.

Part One

TRANSITION TO FEUDALISM

2

R. S. SHARMA

The Kali Age: A Period of Social Crisis*

Some modern protagonists of Indian culture lay accent on everlasting and unchanging norms and values. They are supported by some sociologists who emphasize the stability of the caste institution even under the stress of industrialization.[1] But ancient Indian thinkers themselves held a changing view of their society and its values. This is demonstrated by their speculations regarding the creation of the world and the creation of kingship which had to be set up in order to protect family and property.[2] Although in post-Vedic times *dharma* based on the *varṇa* division, was the ideal to be achieved, it kept on changing in the brāhmaṇical view. According to a verse occurring in the *Śānti Parva dharma* becomes *adharma* in response to the needs of time and place and vice versa.[3] However, brāhmaṇical view of change is cyclic and not evolutionary.

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*I first touched on the problem discussed here in my doctoral thesis prepared under the guidance of Professor A.L. Basham (*Śūdras in Ancient India*, Delhi, 1958, pp. 176, 213-14). I briefly discussed it again in my *Ancient India*, (Delhi, 1978), p 169. Also see B. N. S. Yadava, *The Indian Historical Review*, v (1978-79), pp. 31-63.

Reprinted from S.N. Mukherjea, ed, *India: History and Thought* (Essays in Honour of Professor A.L. Basham) Calcutta, 1982.

The Purāṇas and the Smṛtis point out that the perfect *dharma* consists of four feet and is found only in the Kṛta age. The Kṛta age was an age of perfect bliss and happiness, comparable to the state of nature depicted by Rousseau. It was an age in which *adharma* did not find place in the mind of any *varṇa*. Then it suffered a slight degeneration, giving rise to the second age called the Tretā, when *dharma* lost one foot.[5] Even then, typical of this age was the ideal reign of Rāma depicted by Vālmiki and later taken over by Tulsidas; it was painted as a phase of all-round happiness and prosperity when the brāhmaṇical institutions worked most satisfactorily. The Tretā was followed by the Dvāpara age, which witnessed the great Bhārata war, but even in that age when *dharma* lost one more foot Yuddhiṣṭhira was looked upon as its embodiment.[6] The last phase in the progressive degeneration of *dharma* is marked by the advent of the Kali age, when *dharma* retains only one foot. Eventually pure *dharma* symbolized by the Kṛta is again reestablished after the end of the Kali.

Interestingly enough, the first and the last ages are described in detail, and the two intervening ages receive scant attention in ancient texts. Detailed descriptions of the Kali age are found in almost all the early Purāṇas.[7] Although it is difficult to assign dates to them, R. C. Hazra believes that the earliest such description belongs to the third century A.D.,[8] the second set of descriptions to the eighth century,[9] and the third to the tenth century or so.[10] The dating of the descriptions of the Kali age has apparently been made on the basis of the contents of chapters in which they occur. But Hazra hesitates to use these descriptions for historical purposes. At one place he calls the period from the age of the Nandas and Mauryas to the end of the Andhra rule the Kali age[11] and underlines the presence of the śūdra kings in it.[12] This long span given to the Kali by Hazra is more or less on the line of Pargiter's *Dynasties of the Kali Age*, which covers the period from the Bhārata war (middle of the tenth century B.C.) to the beginning of the Gupta rule.[13]

The general concept of the Kali is more or less clear. Whenever there is a deviation from the established order of things, it is represented as the advent of the Kali or of some traits of that age. Kali means the neglect of rituals, and predominance and influence of heretical sects and also of foreign non-brāhmaṇical rulers. It also means the non-performance of the functions assigned to different social strata or *varṇas* by the Dharmaśāstras. The brāhmaṇical view of these functions is not fixed and rigid: it differs according to time and place, as for example in the case of the functions of the śūdras. Hence the meaning of the established order differs, but each period called Kali by Hazra is characterized by foreign invasions, instability, social tensions, conflicts, and heterodox sects and teachings.

Although in Hazra's view as many as four periods answer the descriptions of the Kali, we would like to concentrate on the description which is assigned by him to the third and early fourth century A.D. We would not be concerned with *kalivarjyas*, which were developed in medieval times.[14] Here we would go not only by the descriptions of the Kali or *yugānta* given in the *Vāyu, Brahmāṇḍa and Viṣṇu Purāṇas* but also by its descriptions in the *Āraṇyaka* and the *Śānti Parva* of the *Mahābhārata*, which have much in common with the early Purāṇas and belong to the same period. We would like to supplement and check the Kali description with the discussion of the importance of *daṇḍa* in *Manu* and the *Śānti Parva*, which fall in the same time bracket. The same use can be made of the description of *arājaka* in the *Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa* of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and also in the *Śānti Parva*.

Hazra's attribution of the description of the Kali in the *Vāyu* and *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas* to *circa* A.D. 200-75 and that in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* to the last quarter of the third or the first quarter of the fourth century coincides with the period between the decline and fall of the Kuṣāṇas and Sātāvāhanas on the one hand and the firm establishment of the Gupta power on the other.[15] It was certainly a period of political instability. In the description of the *yugas* in the *Śānti Parva*, which may be attributed to this period, social order is inextricably linked up with political order. This is true not only of the first three ages, but more so of the Kali age.[16] It is stated that the king is the cause of his age.[17] Since in ancient India it was the responsibility of the king to uphold the *varṇāśrama* system, it is evident that any weakness in polity was bound to find reflection in society.

The main features of the Kali highlighted in the texts assigned to the third century A.D. and probably to the beginning of the fourth century A.D. can be enumerated as mixing of *varṇas* or *varṇasaṃkara*, hostility between śūdras and brāhmaṇas, refusal of vaiśyas to pay and sacrifice, oppression of the people with taxes, widespread theft and robbery, insecurity of family and property, destruction of *yogakṣema*, growing importance of wealth over ritual status, and dominance of *mleccha* princes. All these add up to a state of widespread social disorder. Some of these aspects can be considered to be symptoms of social crisis: others may be treated as its causes and perhaps its consequences. It is stated that at the end of the *yuga* brāhmaṇas; kṣatriyas and vaiśyas, all would be reduced to one *varṇa*.[18] The first three mixing together would be relegated to the position of the śūdras.[19] It is further said that the untouchables (*antyāḥ*) would become middle rankers (*madhyāh*), and vice versa.[20] It might mean that the untouchables assumed the functions of the kṣatriyas and vaiśyas (*madhya*). In the description of the *arājaka* in the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* it is stated that because of the absence of the operation of royal punishment (*rājadaṇḍanipiḍitāḥ*) the atheists (*nāstika*) break the limits (*maryādā*) of the *varṇas* and *āśramas*.[21] This type of *varṇasaṃkara*, described in several other texts, is usually understood in the sense of people breaking the barriers between the *varṇas* in respect of food and marriage and producing 'illegitimate' issues, not sanctioned by the law books. But *varṇasaṃkara* involves something more. In the brāhmaṇical system *varṇa* was identical in many ways with class. In post-Vedic times the Dharmasūtras assigned religious and intellectual functions to the brāhmaṇas and ruling and fighting functions to the kṣatriyas. To the vaiśyas were assigned producing functions comprising agriculture, cattle rearing and trade. The śūdras were asked to serve, but they contributed to production as slaves, artisans, agricultural labourers, etc. Those who were engaged in production and paying taxes and providing surplus labour were called vaiśyas and sūdras, and those who were engaged in consumption and organizing production and distribution and lived on taxes, tributes and gifts, were called kṣatriyas and brāhmaṇas. Therefore, *varṇasaṃkara* would also imply the refusal of the peasants and traders, called vaiśyas, to pay taxes and would thus put in jeopardy the very fabric of society and polity. It is stated for example that the vaiśyas would give up agriculture and trade and live on the professions of artisans, thus adopting the livelihood or occupations of the śūdras.[22] When the application of coercion is recommended to compel members of different *varṇas* to perform their functions, *dāna-daṇḍa* is prescribed in the case of the vaiśyas,[23] for payment was considered to be their important duty. It is further stated in the same context that unless an element of fear is instilled, a person neither performs sacrifices nor does he willingly give.[24] Therefore, the object of applying *daṇḍa* to the vaiśya was to make him pay taxes to the king and offer sacrificial fees to the priests. While the excuse of *varṇasaṃkara* may have been invented for admitting new tribes, foreign and indigenous, to brāhmaṇical society,[25] and also for promoting mobility to tide over difficult situations,[26] it is also without doubt that its description in various texts of the third century and early fourth century A.D. implies a state of class tension and confusion caused by clash of interests between the organizing and managerial functions of the upper two strata and the producing functions of the lower two strata.

Intense hostility between the brāhmaṇas and the śūdras is a striking feature of the description of the *varṇa* confusion in the Kali.[27] Several texts state that the śūdras would adopt the conduct of the brāhmaṇas (*brāhmaṇācāra*), and vice versa (*śūdrācāra*).[28] It is predicted that in respect of bed, seat and food, relations would be established between the śūdras and untouchables (*antyayoni*) on the one hand and the brāhmaṇas on the other.[29] We learn that the śūdras would be greeted respectfully and addressed as *ārya*; on the other hand the brāhmaṇas would be addressed in terms of disrespect (*bho*).[30] Although sometimes it is said that the śūdras would become acquirers of wealth and conduct themselves as kṣatriyas,[31] it is repeatedly stated that the śūdras would behave as brāhmaṇas The dichotomy between the two is brought out in religious terms. It is said that the brāhmaṇas would give up *japa* (the recitation of the name of the god) and the śūdras would become devoted to this practice (*japaparāyaṇāḥ*)[32] That the śūdras would expound *dharma* to the brāhmaṇas is also predicted.[33] Furthermore, the śūdras would take to asceticism (*tapa*).[34] Probably about such śūdras it is stated that they would live through gifts from others and the brāhmaṇas through the service of others.[35] What is striking about the śūdra-brāhmaṇa conflict is the fact that in a passage from the *Āraṇyaka Parva* the śūdras are given an upper hand and represented as oppressors of brāhmaṇas. It is said, for example, that stricken with fear and oppressed by the *vṛṣalas* the *dvijas* would raise a hue and cry and unable to find saviours they would wander over the earth and take shelter in rivers, mountains and districts.[36] The reference adds that harassed by the *dasyus* and oppressed with taxes by bad kings the best among the brāhmaṇas would give up patience and in despair would do unworthy things as servants of the śūdras.[37] The whole passage gives the impression of the capture of political power by śūdra kings who tried to turn the tables on the brāhmaṇas. Whatever may be the interpretation of the *Āraṇyaka* verses, the general tenor of intense hostility between the brāhmaṇas and the śūdras in the context of the Kali description of about the third-fourth centuries A.D. is unmistakable. Sometimes it is expressed in religious idiom, and at other times in social and political idiom. But the outburst of the śūdra antagonism to the brahmaṇas can be explained if we bear in mind that the brāhmaṇas gave the śūdras the lowest ritualistic position in order to make them work as slaves, hired labourers, domestic servants, sharecroppers, etc. of the brāhmaṇas and others; rich brāhmaṇa landowners are mentioned in Pāli texts. Thus, in the description of the *varṇa* conflict in the Kali age we notice two types of contradictions: the one between the brāhmaṇas and kśatriyas on the one hand and the vaiśyas on the other; and the other between the brāhmaṇas and the śūdras.

The Kali age is marked by insecurity and widespread lawlessness. Both this age and the period of anarchy is characterized by the destructions of *yogakṣema*, which is usually translated as welfare[38] But *yoga* should be understood in the sense of acquisition and *kṣema* as wealth or property, and generally *yogakṣema* should be understood in the sense of protection of property.[39] It therefore is evident that in the Kali age there was no security of property. This may have especially mattered to people of privileged classes with vested interests. The absence of security is underlined by the prevalence of thefts and robberies. We are told that thieves and robbers would conduct themselves as rulers and rulers would behave as thieves and robbers.[40] Insecurity of property is characteristic of both *arājaka* as well as the Kali. It is stated that in a state of anarchy a person can neither hope to acquire property nor to set up family;[41] two combine to seize the property of one and many combine to seize the property of two. Further, a free person is reduced to slavery, and women are forcibly abducted.[42] In the description of the Kali several references represent householders as thieves (*parimoṣaka*)[43] and stealers of clothings.[44] They also appear as thieves of crops.[45] We learn that on account of oppressive taxes householders or peasants (*gṛhastha*) were reduced to a state of penury, and they had no option but to take to stealing although they also masqueraded as *munis* and took to trade.[46]

How was this situation of widespread social disorder and *varṇa* conflicts caused? It is attributed to natural calamities such as famine, drought and heavy rains, but oppressive taxes appear to be an important factor. It is stated that extremely troubled with famine and oppressive taxes the suffering people would migrate to countries prosperous on account of wheat and barley[47]. A text of about the sixth century A.D. speaks not only of drought and oppressive taxes, but also of cold, tornado, heat wave, and heavy rains in this context.[48] It speaks of the robber-like behaviour of the king,[49] and states that faced with the attack of such greedy and contemptible kings on their women and property the subjects would take shelter in forests and mountains; and live on vegetables, roots, meat, honey, fruits and seeds[50] But references belonging to the third and fourth centuries also bring into sharp focus the oppressive activities of the rulers. They tell us that in the Kali the kings would cease to become protectors and seize the property of their subjects through various kinds of taxes and imposts such as customs (*śulka*) and interest (*vyāja*).[51] It seems that this statement refers to the oppression of traders. Another passage seems to speak of the oppression of peasants. We learn that at the end of the *yuga* the kings would only enjoy taxes (*bali* and *bhāga*); they would give up the function of protecting the people and would be concerned with protecting themselves.[52] What is said about the king is also attributed to his agents. It is said that officials called *goptṛs* would turn out to be oppressors and give up administrative functions.[53]

Migration of people on account of the unbearable burden of taxes appears to be an important characteristic of the Kali age. This is stated about people in general and brāhmaṇas in particular. Obviously this phenomenon applies to settled and civilized areas. But it is a recurrent feature not confined to any particular period. References to migrations because of royal oppression are found in the Jātakas. It is likely that fleeing of taxpaying peasants, artisans and traders became more common in the third and early fourth centuries to which the Kali references are ascribed.[54] Migrations may have been an important cause of the decay of urban settlements in northern India and in the Deccan in post-Kuṣāṇa and post-Sātavāhana times.[55]

We can speculate on the reasons for the levy of oppressive taxes by the kings in the third and in the beginning of the fourth centuries A.D. It is likely that the needs of the rulers went on increasing on account of their demand for foreign goods, especially luxury articles. Because of flourishing foreign trade they got accustomed to a style of life which they could not maintain for long. The king would ask the traders to procure any commodity he needed even if they had to pay a very high price for it.[56] It seems that their demands could no longer be satisfied by the peasants, traders, artisans and labourers, in other words by the vaiśyas and śūdras. The fertility of land in certain parts of the country may have been exhausted. *Praṇaya* and *viṣṭi* may have been normally levied from the peasants, for when this was not done it was especially recorded by Rudradāman.

Whatever may have been the reasons for the tyrannical taxation typical of the Kali age, it is obvious that it runs counter to the principles of taxation enunciated in the law books. The basic tenet that taxes were paid in lieu of protection afforded to the people was certainly violated in this age. Similarly, the principle that only as much taxes should be levied as enabled the people to carry on was being clearly transgressed. A passage from the *Āraṇyaka Parva* suggests that this large-scale exploitation was caused by the *mlecchas*, who are considered to be foreign rulers. It is stated that for a long time the earth would be filled with the *mlecchas*, and out of fear of the burden of taxes the brāhmaṇas would run helter skelter in all the ten directions[57] We further learn that the earth would have many *mleccha* kings, all addicted to falsehood, sin, and lying.[58] But the next passage which specifies the names of the dynasties does not show all of them to be foreigners. Thus they are mentioned as Āndhras, Śakas, Pulindas, Yavanas, Śūdras and Ābhīras. In addition to them the Kāmbojas and Aurṇikas find place[59], however, in one manuscript the first is replaced by the Bāhlikas[60] and in another the second is replaced by the Kuṇikas.[61] Although neither the Aurṇikas nor the Kuṇikas can be clearly identified, it seems that some of these were foreigners while others were improvised indigenous tribal dynasties. The Purāṇas dealing with the dynasties of the third century A.D. give enough indication of the political upheaval caused by local dynasts A Māgadha (considered to be a mixed caste) king called Viśvaphāṇi is credited with the overthrow of all the existing kings and with their replacement by the Kaivartas, Madrakas, Pulindas and unbrāhmaṇical peoples in various countries.[62] It is explicitly stated that the eunuch-like Viśvaphāṇi would overthrow the established kṣatriya order and create another kṣatriya order.[63] This clearly implies the substitution of the existing chiefs, princes, nobles and warriors by a new set of improvised adventurers. It is symptomatic of a widespread internal upheaval with which foreign elements alone were not connected. Therefore, it would be wrong to attribute internal lawlessness solely to foreign elements. Both foreign and indigenous peoples were eventually brahmanized. In the case of Viśvāphāṇi it is said that he would worship the gods and ancestors, perform sacrifices on bank of the Gangā and would attain the realm of Śakra.[64] We are not told anything about the ancestry and antecedents of Viśvaphāṇi, as in the case of many upstart dynasties in the third and fourth centuries A.D. In other cases dynasties and peoples are only mentioned, while in this case a Māgadha individual is mentioned.

The brāhmaṇical ire is directed against both foreign and indigenous dynasties because they took time to acquire legitimacy and brāhmaṇical ways of life. In a period of instability there certainly arose situations when might became right.

Whoever possessed horses, elephants chariots and wealth managed to become the king.[65] Whatever may have been the ancestry and antecedents of kings they proved to be tyrannical and exploitative, with the result that the chain of a strong reaction against the upper orders, who formed the mainstay of the government, continued for some time. Thus the *varṇa* system was disturbed, and class tension and confusion ensued.

It would be wrong to think that only the poor and oppressed sections tried to upset the *varṇa* system. The early centuries of the Christian era were marked by a great spurt in artisanal and commercial activities. This is attested by all types of evidence —epigraphs, archaeology, Buddhist texts and foreign accounts. The abundance of coins, especially coppers, the presence of towns and flourishing foreign trade all bear witness to it. It is stated that in the sinful age, i.e. in the Kali, all would turn traders,[66] who evidently are looked upon with contempt because of their anti-*varṇa* attitudes and activities. The traders are represented as indulging in many tricks and selling enormous commodities by adopting fraudulent weights and measures.[67] The *Divyāvadāna* of about the second-third century A.D. indicates the oppression and harassment of traders through the imposition of customs, ferry dues, police station dues, etc. which they tried to escape by various means.[68] The Smṛtis of about the same time recommend advanced methods of assessing tolls than are found in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya.[69] In addition to customs duties merchants had to pay a normal tax called *kara*,[70] which in the *Arthaśāstra* is taken by Ghoshal in the technical sense of benevolence.[71] The Śānti *Parva* lays down rules for assessing a general tax called *śilpapratikara* to be levied from artisans,[72] not known to earlier texts, which ask artisans to serve for a day in a month for the king.[73] All this may have caused resentment among artisans and merchants against the existing political system. Many of them developed a natural grudge against a social system which in spite of their prosperity did not accord them high status. A good number of them tried to improve their status and win social prestige by making gifts in the cause of Buddhism. The description of the Kali in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* states that gift became the sole means to acquire *dharma*.[74] We further learn that the possession of wealth became the only source of acquiring high family status.[75] Further, the accumulation of gems and metals alone conferred praiseworthiness.[76] It is likely that in order to express their resentment and improve their ritualistic status artisans and traders joined hands with peasants and agricultural labourers and created some kind of commotion. There is a faint indication of linkage between peasants and traders. At several places it is stated that burdened with taxes the peasants would take to the vocations of traders.[77]

Apart from Buddhism, which still retained something of its old fervour, some heterodox sects such as Vaiṣṇavism tried to improve the position of the lower orders. The Vaiṣṇavite teachings were not meant for upsetting the *varṇa* system, but were capable of being interpreted as such. The *Gītā* declaration, that even the sinful (*pāpayonayaḥ*) vaiśyas, śūdras and women can attain heaven if they take refuge in Kṛṣṇa,[78] could act as a sop to the oppressed and offended sections of society but could also encourage them to revolt against the existing order. The predominance of the *pāṣaṇḍas* or teachers and followers of heterodox sects is underlined in the description of the Kali.[79] The adoption of certain symbols is considered to be the only ground for entering an *āṣrama*; these symbols were presumably prescribed by different heretical sects.[80] We hear of sinful śūdra ascetics taking to begging and even good people adopting the mode of the life of the heterodox sects.[81] The *Vāyu Purāṇa* speaks of śūdra *jātis* and *tapasvins*[82] and mentions śūdras in a calm pose, clad in brown red garments, with shaven heads and white teeth, practising *dharma*[83] The śūdra ascetic is considered such a great anathema that Rāma is represented as having killed the śūdra Śambūka for practising asceticism. Therefore, all the references quoted above show the impact of heterodox ideology on the śūdras. How this actually moulded their minds we have no means of finding out. Under the influence of dissident sects advanced sections of śūdras and vaiśyas, such as artisans and traders, may have mobilized the exploited sections and created a situation in which the norms and values established by the *varṇa* system underwent significant changes. This state of affairs is depicted as Kali in the *Mahābhārata* and Purāṇas and as *arājaka* in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. All these descriptions speak not only of removal of frontiers of food and marriage but also, what is more significant, of exchange of functions between social classes. This could imply that peasants and traders namely vaiśyas, refused to pay taxes to the rulers called kṣatriyas; artisans, who were śūdras, may have adopted a similar stance. Similarly slaves, agricultutal labourers, sharecroppers and even untouchables refused to perform their functions, which would mean that the supply of labour to members of the higher *varṇas* was stopped. The writers of the Kali account evidently have in mind such a situation when they present brāhmaṇas in a pitiable plight, tortured with taxes and fleeing in all directions for relief. The condition of the kṣatriyas is also depicted as lamentable. It was therefore a period of intense social crisis, and of severe trial for the classical *varṇa* system.

Apparently in order to meet this crisis strong coercive measures are recommended in *Manu* and the *Śānti Parva*. The exercise of *daṇḍa* assumes an importance which it neither enjoys in any earlier law book nor in any other text. The emphasis shifts from the people-pleasing activities of the king to his fiercer role of suppression. It is stated that coercive power protects *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma*.[84] By means of it foodgrains and property are guarded.[85] On account of the fear of punishment from the king nobody commits sin in this world just as in the other world nobody commits sin on account of the fear of the coercive power of Yama.[83] Punishment is recommended for keeping all the *varṇas* in their proper places. It is advised that by way of punishment the brāhmaṇa should be admonished, the kśatriya should be made to surrender, and the vaiśya should be made to make gifts or payment. In this context the śūdra is called *nirdaṇḍa*,[87] probably because of his incapacity to pay in comparison with the vaiśya. Physical punishment is prescribed for suppressing the *caṇḍālas* and *mlecchas*,[88] evidently people outside the brāhmaṇical fold. In all likelihood such punishment was meant for śūdras in general. The use of coercion is considered essential for maintaining the *āśrama* or the life-stage system. It is stated that only out of fear of punishment members of all the stages stick to their stage.[89] The king is called *daṇḍa*, and also leader and discipliner; what is more important, he is called the imperishable *dharma*, lord of the *varṇas* and *āśramas*.[90] The point is emphasized that the power of coercion (*daṇḍa*) disciplines the subjects, protects everybody, and activises the slothful; wise men consider *dharma* to be identical with *daṇḍa*.[91] Apparently the mechanism of coercion was considered very effective in restoring social harmony and in compelling members of various classes to carry out the duties assigned to them. But the performance of functions was particularly important in the case of the producing classes. Here we may refer to an apt simile from the *Śānti Parva*. It states that if coercion is not applied, camels, oxen, asses and donkeys, yoked to the cart, do not move.[92] This advice is apparently intended for those who are in charge of making people work. Manu lays down that the vaiśyas and śūdras should not be allowed to deviate from their functions, otherwise the whole world would be thrown into a state of chaos.[93] It is in this context that Manu prescribes slavery for the śūdra either through purchase or without purchase, for in Manu's opinion he was created for this purpose by the Creator himself.[94] We further learn that in order to put an end to disorder (*viplava*) appearing in the order set up by the *śrutis* and *smṛtis*, at the end of Kali would appear Viṣṇu in the Kalki incarnation in a brāhmaṇa family, and he would destroy all the *mlecchas*, *dasyus* and people of mischievous conduct and would reestablish all people in their respective *dharmas*.[95] The Purāṇas assign a similar role to a king called Pramati, who is identified by some scholars as Candra Gupta II.[96]

All these descriptions should not be dismissed as mere speculation and figments of imagination. That social disorders were a recurrent feature in the early centuries of the Christian era and that attempts were made to restore the *varṇa* system can also be inferred from inscriptions. In the second century A.D. Gautamīputra Śātakarṇi is credited with having put an end to confusion between the four *varṇas*.[97] The tradition is continued in later inscriptions. An epigraph of the Pallava king Siṃhavarman of the sixth century A.D. speaks of his being ever ready to save *dharma* beset with the evils arising out of the Kali age.[98] A copper-plate grant issued by Viṣṇugopa in the twelfth year of this king records the gift of the village Nedungarāya in Maṇḍarāṣṭra as Śāraṇikagrāma to several brāhmaṇas. The village means a 'refugee-village',[99] which was created for providing shelter to troubled brāhmaṇas, apparently from some neighbouring area of Nellore district to which the grant belongs. In this case the brahmanization of the village was a clear consequence of social disorder. Similarly the Kadamba king Śāntivarman(c. A.D. 455-70) is credited with having saved brāhmaṇahood in the Kali age.[100] However, while coercion may have been used in the third and fourth centuries A.D. to restore order it is neither possible to pinpoint the region nor the time marked by disorder. But the general descriptions of the Kali in the texts do point to a state of deep social crisis, possibly in the areas indoctrinated with the brāhmaṇical values and teachings.

In dealing with the Kali crisis coercion was coupled with concession. It seems that defiance on the part of peasants, traders, artisans and labourers made it difficult to collect taxes. The normal practice, according to which taxes were collected from peasants and others, brought to a central pool, and then disbursed as salaries to officials and gifts to priests, failed to work. Hence it was necessary to evolve some alternative system. Manu therefore recommends that fiscal and administrative officers should be paid by grants of land as salaries.[101] The law books of Gupta times prescribe land grants as rewards for valour.[102] Since such grants were recorded on perishable material they have not been recovered. But from the second century, more extensively from the third and fourth centuries A.D., we get a large number of land grants recorded in lieu of religious services for acquiring spiritual merit. Since these grants were to last for ever they were inscribed on stone or copper which enabled them to survive. It is significant that such grants received importance at a time when oppressed with taxes the brāhmaṇas are described as running in all directions for security and livelihood. It is likely that from the settled areas the brāhmaṇas went to the peripheral areas where they were welcomed by the new princes.

In a period of social turmoil, when it was difficult to collect taxes, the usefulness of land grants can be hardly exaggerated. Land grants to religious parties on a large scale with administrative rights absolved the kings of the responsibility of collecting revenues and maintaining law and order. The same purpose was served by grants made to secular parties. It was no longer found necessary to maintain a huge bureaucracy of the Maurya type. Decentralization became the order of the day. Fiscal and administrative officials, posted in the different parts of a kingdom, had to fend for themselves, and in the process emerged to be powerful landed intermediaries with vested interests.

The features of the Kali as described in the texts of the third and fourth centuries acquire meaning and significance only if they are examined against the general background of the period. The period following the age of the Kuṣāṇas and Sātavāhanas and preceding that of the Guptas was marked not only by political instability but also by decline of trade and towns. In addition to the Purāṇic passages inscriptions also suggest that there was a drive for more taxes. All this seriously affected the old scheme of *varṇas,* which did not exactly suit the new situation. Apparently the Kali precipitated the pace of transition from the classical *varṇa* model to the modified *varṇa* model of a feudal type. Those who practised *varṇasaṃkara* wanted to exchange places in the existing social order; they never conceived of a system in which social classes could be dispensed with. They attacked property and privilege, but they never thought of a society in which these two would disappear. Similarly, those who tried to restore the old classical *varṇa* stabilized through the mechanism of birth and ritual failed to resurrect it in its pristine purity. They found it necessary to rearrange and redistribute property and privilege. They had to come to terms with many foreign and indigenous chiefs who assumed power not on account of legitimacy and kṣatriya origins but by dint of valour and adventure in a period of social upheaval. These had now to be accorded the corresponding ritualistic status and called kṣatriyas, however grudgingly. A more fundamental change seems to have taken place in the position of agricultural slaves and labourers, who seem to have been mostly śūdras. The practice of employing slaves in agricultural production practically stopped in Gupta times.[103] On account of this factor as well as the practice of absorbing peasants in brāhmaṇical society through land grants, the śūdras began to be represented as peasants in post-Gupta texts. While the śūdras were upgraded in this manner, the vaiśya peasants were downgraded on account of the creation of landed intermediaries who in many areas took the place of royal officials for collecting taxes and maintaining order. Seen in its totality the Kali crisis of the late third and fourth centuries appears as a prelude to the feudalization of Indian society.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1] Such views are expressed by Louis Dumont in *Homo Hierarchicus* (Delhi, 1970), pp. 218, 228, etc. and have been criticized by Suvira Jaiswal in 'Caste in the socio-economic framework of early India', her presidential address for Section I at the thirty-eighth session of the Indian History Congress at Bhubaneswar in December 1977.

[2] R. S. Sharma, *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India* (Delhi, 1968), ch. 4.

[3] *ŚP*, 79.31.

[4] Ibid 70, 7-13.

[5] Ibid. 70, 14-5.

[6] Ibid. 16-7.

[7] The descriptions of the Kali in the Purāṇas ascribed to early medieval times have not been taken into account. R. N. Nandi tells me that those descriptions are of a conventional nature and do not reflect contemporary realities, but obviously their datings by Hazra have been made on the basis of the reflection of contemporary situations in them.

[8] R. C. Hazra, *Studies in the Puranic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs*, 2nd edn (Delhi, 1975), pp. 216-17. The descriptions of *yuga-dharma* in the *Vāyu* and *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas* are attributed to *circa* A.D. 200-75 (pp. 174-75) and in the *Viṣṇu* to the last quarter of the fourth century A.D. (p. 175).

[9] The nature of Kali described in the *Kūrma P*, I.29 is assigned to 'probably 700-800 A.D.' (ibid. p. 178); similarly ch. 36 (28-51) on *yuga-dharma* in the *Padma P.* is placed 'most probably in the former half of the 8th century' (ibid. p. 183).

[10] *Matsya P.*, ch. 165, on *yuga-dharma* is considered not later than A.D. 950 (ibid. p. 177); similarly *Padma P.*, chapters 101, 105 and 110 are attributed to a period most probably later than A.D. 900 but earlier than A.D. 1400 (ibid. p. 132); *Brahma P.*, chapters, 223-31, on marriage, holy places, worship, *yuga-dharma*, and results of actions are assigned to c. A.D. 900-1200, which is the date of the compilation of the present *Brahma* (ibid. p. 187).

[11] Ibid. p. 206.

[12] Ibid.

[13] F. E. Pargiter, *The Purāṇa Text of the Dynasties of the Kali Age*, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, reprint (Varanasi, 1962).

[14] R. S. Sharma, *Social Changes in Early Medieval India* (Delhi, 1969), pp. 5-6; for details see Batuknath Bhattacharya, *The 'Kalivarjyas'* (Calcutta, 1943).

[15] Hazra, op. cit., pp. 174-75.

[16] '*rājā kṛtayugasraṣṭā tretāyā dvāparasya ca, yugasya ca caturthasya rājā bhavati 'kāraṇam'* *ŚP*, 70, 25; cf. *Udyoga Parva*, 130. 16.

[17] '. . . *rājā kālasya kāraṇam*,' *ŚP*, 70·9; cf. *Udyoga Parva*, 130.14.

[18] *ĀP*, 188.14.

[19] Ibid. 18; cf. 186.31

[20] Ibid. 188.19.

[21] II. 67.32.

[22] '*vaiśya kṛṣivāṇijyādi santajya nijakarma vat: śūdravṛttyā pravatsryanti kārukarmopajīvinaḥ*', *Viṣṇu P.*, Gita Press, V. S. 2009, VI. 1.36.

[23] *ŚP*, 15.9.

[24] '*nābhito yajate rājan nābhito dātumicchati*,' ibid. 13.

[25] V. Jha, 'Varasaṃkara in the Dharma Sūtras: Theory and Practic'e, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, xiii, 287-88.

[26] Bharti Dikshit, 'Mobility in Ancient India' (in Hindi), D. Phil. Thesis (Allahabad University, 1978).

[27] '*akrameṇa manuṣyāṇām bhaviṣyati tadā kṛṣyā, virodham atha yāsyanti vṛṣalāḥ brāhmaṇaiḥ saha*, *ĀP*, 188.69.

[28] *Vāyu P.*, Mansukhram Mor, ed. (Calcutta, 1959), II. 57.41.

[29] Ibid. 39.

[30] *ĀP*, 186.33.

[31] '*brāhmaṇāḥ śūdrakarmāsthathā śūdrā dhanārjakāḥ, kṣatradharmsṇa vāpy atra vartayanti gate yuge*,' ibid. 26.

[32] ibid. 28.

[33] ibid. 188.63.

[34] *Vāyu P.*, II, 57.46.

[35] '*śūdra bhaikṣeṇa jīvanti brāhmaṇaḥ paricaryayā* . . . *ŚP*. 70.20.

[36] *ĀP*, 188.58-60.

[37] ibid. 61-62.

[38] *ŚP*, 70.20; '*nārājake janapade yogakṣemaḥ pravartate*, *Rāmāyaṇa*, Gita Press, V.S. 2023, II. 67.24.

[39] The term is used in this sense in relation to traders in *ŚP*, 88.11, and *Manu*, VII. 127.

[40] '*rājavṛttau sthitaś cauraś cauravṛttaś ca parthivāḥ*,' *Vāyu P.*, II. 57.42.

[41] *ĀP*, 186.40.

[42] *ŚP*, 67.12.

[43] Ibid. 14.15.

[44] *Brahmāṇḍa P.*, Sriram Sharma Acharya, ed. (Mathura, 1967) 1.2. 31.60. '*sasyacorā bhaviṣyanti tathā cailāpahāriṇaḥ*'.

[45] ibid. cf. *Vāyu P.*, II. 57.61.

[46] '*karabhārabhayātpuṃso gṛhasthāh parimoṣakāḥ, municchadmākṛticchannā vāṇijyam upajīvate*', *ĀP*, VI. 186.40.

[47] '*durvikṣakarapīḍābhir atīvopadrutā janāḥ,, godhūmānnayavānnādhyāndeśān yāsyanti duḥkhitaḥ*', *Viṣṇu P.*, VI. 1.38,.

[48]'*anāvṛṣṭyā vinaṃkṣayanti durbhikṣakarapīḍitāḥ, sitavātātapaprāvṛḍhimairnyonyataḥ prajāḥ*', *Srimadbhāgvata Mahāpurāṇa*, with the Hindi commentary of Govindadas 'Vinita' (Mathura, 1939), XII. 2.10.

[49]Ibid. XII. 2.13.

[50]Ibid. XII. 2.8-9.

[51]'*arakṣitāro harttāro śulkavyājena pārthivāḥ, hāriṇo janavittānāṃ saṃprāpte tu kalau yuge*', *Viṣṇu P.*, VI. 1.34.

[52]'*na rakṣitāro bhoktāro balibhāgasya pārthivāḥ, yugānte ca bhaviṣyanti svarakṣaṇaparāyaṇāḥ*', *Brahmāṇḍa P.*, 1 2.31.48; cf.*Vāyu P.*, 57. 48.

[53]'*goptāras cāpy agoptāraḥ prabhaviśyanty aṣāsanāḥ*, *Vāyu P.*, II. 57. 57.

[54]We hear of massive migrations of peasants resulting in desolation of villages in the seventeenth century in North India.

[55]For a survey of archaeological evidence available till 1970 see R. S. Sharma, "Decay of Gangetic Towns in Gupta and post-Gupta Times" *JIH*, Golden Jubilee Volume (1973), pp. 135-50.

[56]G B. Upreti, 'Avadānas on the Political Role of the Traders', *Buddhist Studies* (Delhi, 1974), p. 91.

[57]'*mahimlecchajanākīrṇā bhaviṣyati tato'cirāt, karabhārabhayād viprā bhajiṣyanti diṣo daṣa*', 188 70.

[58]*ĀP.*, 186.29.

[59]Ibid. 30.

[60]MS. G. 3.

[61]MS. TI GI.

[62]Pargiter, op. cit. p. 52. Pargiter prefers the reading *pancakāms* in the place of *madrakāms*, which occurs in a *Brahmāṇḍa* manucript (ibid. fn. 34); in any case both appear to be local peoples. Similarly he reads *pulindān brāhmaṇāṃs tathā* (ibid.), but the tenor of verses, which speaks of the uprooting of the *pārthivas* and all the other *varṇas*, goes better with *pulindābrāhmaṇān*, which occurs in MS. *b. Vṣ* (ibid. 36.). Incidentally MS. *b. Vṣ* is one of the earliest manuscripts of the *Viṣṇu P.* fairly well written and fairly correct (ibid. xxxiii).

[63]Pargiter, op. cit. pp. 52-53.

[64]Ibid. p. 53.

[65]'*yo'ṣvarathanāgāḍhya sa rājā bhaviṣyati. . .* ', *Viṣṇu P.*, VI. 1.34; '*ity evam anekadoṣottare tu bhūmaṇḍale sarvavarṇesu eva yo yo balavān sa bhūpati bhaviṣyati*', *Viṣṇu P.*, IV. 24.93.

[66]'*sarve vāṇijakāścāpi bhavisaynty adhame yuge*', *Brahmāṇḍa, P.*, 1. 2. 31 52; *Vāyu P.*, II. 57.51.

[67]'*bhūyiṣṭham kūṭamānaiś ca paṇyam vikrīṇate janāḥ, vaṇijāś naravyāghra bahumāya bhavanty ut*', *ĀP*, 186.46.

[68]*The Divyāvadāna*, E. B. Cowell and R. A. Neil, ed. (Cambridge, 1886), pp, 4, 92-3, 501. cf. G. B. Upreti, op. cit. p. 91.

[69]U. N. Ghoshal, *Contributions to the History of the Hindu Revenue System*, 2nd edn (Calcutta, 1972), pp. 107-08.

[70] Ś*P*, 12.88.11; *Manu*, VIII. 127.

[71] Ghoshal, op. cit. p. 111.

[72] 88 12.

[73] Ghoshal, op. cit. pp. 133-34.

[74] '*dānam eva dharmahetuḥ*', VI. 24.89.

[75] '*tataś' cārtha evābhijanahetuḥ*', *Viṣṇu P*., IV. 24 70.

[76] Ibid IV. 24.81.

[77] *ĀP*, 186.40.

[78] IX.32.

[79] K. H. Dhruva, 'Historical Contents of the Yugapurāṇa', JBORS, xvi, 23, verse 100. It is argued that the Kali description of the *Yuga P*., belongs to *c*. 50 B C, but the *Purāṇa* seems to have been a work of the third century A D.

[80] '*lingadhāraṇam evaśramahetuḥ*', *Viṣṇu P*., IV 24.82.

[81] '*bhaikṣaurataparāḥ śūdraḥ pravrajyālingino' dharmāḥ, pāṣaṇḍasaṃśrāyam vṛttimāsrayisyanti satkṛtāḥ*', *Viṣṇu P*., IV. 1.37.

[82] II. 57.51.

[83] '*śukladantā jitākṣāś ca muṇḍāḥ kāṣāyāsasaḥ śūdrā dharma cariṣyanti yugānte paryupasthite*' II. 57.60; cf. *JBORS*, xvi, 23, verses 104-05.

[84] Ś*P*, 15.3.

[85] '*daṇḍena rakṣyate dhānyam dhanam daṇḍena*', ibid. 4.

[86] Ibid 5; the *yamadaṇḍa* is conceived as a counterpart of the *rājadaṇḍa*.

[87] '*vāci daṇḍo brāhmaṇānām kṣatriyaṇām bhujārpaṇam, dānadaṇḍa smṛto vaiśyo nirdaṇḍaḥ śūdra ucyate*', *SP*, 15.9.

[88] '*caṇḍāla mlecchajātinām daṇḍenacanivāraṇam*'. This occurs in the Ś*P*, in D7S MS. in Appendix I, no. 10, line 21 in the Critical Edition.

[89] *brahmacāri grhasthaś ca vānaprasta 'tha bhikṣukaḥ, daṇdaṣyaiva bhayād ete manusyā vartmani sthitāḥ*, Ś*P*, 15.12.

[90] '*sa rājā puruṣo daṇḍaḥ sa netā śāsitā ca, saḥ varṇānām āśramāṇām ca dharmaprabhurathāyayaḥ*., D.S inserts this after Ś*P*, 14.14, Critical Fdn, Appendix I, lines 1-2 (p. 620).

[91] '*daṇḍah śasti prajāh sarvā daṇḍa evābhiirakṣati, dāṇḍaḥ supteṣu jagarti daṇḍam dharmaṃ vidurbudhāh*', Ś*P*, 15.2.

[92] 15.41.

[93] '*vaiśyaśūdro prayatnena svāni karmāṇi kārayet tau, hi cyutau svakarmabhyaḥ kṣobhayetām idaṃ jagat*', VIII. 418.

[94] VIII. 413.

[95] *Viṣṇu P*., IV. 24.98.

[96] S.N. Roy, *Historical and Cultural Studies in the Purāṇas* (Allahabad, 1978), pp. 132.45; A.B.L. Awasthi, however, considers Pramati to be identical with the Candella king Dhanga. *History from the Purāṇas* (Lucknow, 1975), pp. 118-33.

[97] *Select Inscrciptions* (Calcutta, 1965), no 185, l. 6.

[98] '*kaliyuga-doṣāvasa* (*nna*)-*dharmmodharaṇanitya-sannaddho* . ., ibid no. 67, line 13, with fns. 9 and 10 on p. 470.

[99] B. Ch. Chhabra *et al*, 'Ten Years of Indian Epigraphy (1937-46), *Ancient India*, no. 5, 48.

[100] *Select Inscriptions*, no. 69, verse 11.

[101] VII. 118-9.

[102] Bṛhaspati, quoted in *Vyavahāramayūkha*, P. V. Kane and S. G. Patwardhan (tr.), pp. 25-27.

[103] R. S. Sharma, *Śūdras in Ancient India* (Delhi, 1958), pp. 230-34.

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3

B. N. S. YADAVA

The Accounts of the Kali Age and the Social Transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages

The accounts of the Kali age in the *Mahābhārata*, the Hindu Purāṇas and some other texts comprise many strands, and are obviously exaggerations. Nevertheless, at one level, the myth of the four *yugas*[1] provided a schematic framework for the expression of the awareness of changes in the material conditions and traditional values. The early accounts of this nature and also some portions of the later ones, which just continue the earlier traditions, may be studied for investigating the transition from antiquity to the Middle Ages in India. They may be found, to some extent, to embody, in the ideological garb of the progressive degeneration up to a certain stage in the Kali age, the cognition by the contemporaries or near-contemporaries of the forces and tendencies that were setting off towards the Middle Ages, together with the changes consequent upon them.

The idea of decadence may of course be found to have been more or less universal, embodying diverse perspectives,[2]

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including the general tendency of the dread of change. But in the case of the accounts of the Kali age something more appears to have been involved. The sweeping generalizations in these accounts are not so significant by themselves as when correlated historically with the evidence gleaned from other sources.

Considered as a whole, the early accounts of the Kali age, viewed as an age of all-round degeneration, allude, in a jumbled way, to so many events and tendencies—foreign invasions; the emergence of a sizable ruling aristocracy including, to a marked degree, the foreigners (Yavanas, Śakas, Hūṇas, etc.) and the outlandish people; natural calamities like famines and droughts; economic decline, including the decay of cities and the decline of trade, commerce and money economy; the disturbances in the *cāturvarṇya* (the system of the four *varṇas*), as evidenced by the rise of the śūdras, the degradation of the vaiśyas, and the depression of the older ruling aristocracy and the priestly élite; the heightened social conflict; the exploitation by the newly emerging ruling class, as revealed by references to exorbitant taxes and oppressive forced labour leading to peasant subjection; the impact of the heretical religions; the general decline of traditional moral and religious values, etc.[3]

The situation marked by the process of the end of age, as reflected in the particular events, tendencies and changes threatening the old order, began to obtrude itself overwhelmingly upon the attention of many thinking people, as the archetype of degeneration, roughly speaking in the early centuries[4] of the Christian era, or rather near about the middle of the first millennium A.D. This can be inferred on the basis of historical examination of the portions of the texts in which the early accounts of the Kali age occur.[5]

Thus, many statements in the accounts appear to have a significant bearing on the transition from the ancient to the Middle Ages, which brought about, in course of time, some changes in the socio-economic sphere. The accounts of Kali age in the later texts (Purāṇas as well as some other texts) which were composed during or even after the early medieval period continued the earlier tradition, though at the same time they introduced some new elements which had become manifest in course of the maturing of these tendencies and also as a result of other changes. This is not surprising, for elsewhere also the idea of decadence may be found to have always had some contemporary reference.[6]

In the description of the Kali age the *Mahābhārata*[7] says that the *antyas* will become *madhyas* and the latter will go down in the social scale. Here we get a vague reference to the approximation of the śūdras[8] to the status of the vaiśyas and the degradation of the latter as one of the most significant phenomena marking the end of the age (*yugānta*). The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*[9] in the same context, regards the śūdras as fortunate and further states that the vaiśyas would leave agriculture and commerce and take to the occupations of the śūdras—"servitude or the exercise of mechanical art"[10]—as petty artisans (*kārukarmopajīvinaḥ*). While dwelling on the degradation of vaiśyas in that age, the *Skanda Purāṇa*[11] says that after giving up trade and commerce, they would become oilmen (*tailakārāḥ*) or rice-huskers (*taṇḍulakāriṇaḥ*), and many of them would be dependent on *rājaputra* chiefs. Thus, it gives an idea of the traders and merchants becoming sub-servient to the local set-up and maintaining themselves by the occupations conditioned by the local needs.

In the light of the account of the age of decadence in the *Daśāvatāracarita*[12] of Kṣemendra (eleventh century), the approximation of the śūdras to the status of the vaiśyas can be understood as the transformation[13] of the śūdra slaves and servants mostly into dependent peasants (tenants, share-croppers, and agricultural labourers)[14] in course of the economic and social development.[15] Probably the references in the *Mahābhārata* to cultivation in low-lying areas,[16] to the use of the hoe (*kuddāla*)[17] instead of the plough, and to the yoking of immature[18] oxen to the plough have some bearing on the agricultural operations of the poor people, including mostly the śūdras who either fended for themselves or worked as petty dependent tenants with only limited means. These phenomena may have characterized the situation in which the process mentioned above was emerging or had just emerged. However, on the whole, as the evidence of the *Mahābhārata*[19] reveals, the śūdras began to earn wealth and their economic status tended to improve. The statement[20] that the śūdras would not serve the *dvijas* in the Kali age suggests the emergence of a section of such people[21] belonging to this *varṇa* as were not dependent.

The term *antyā* occurring in the verse of the *Mahābhārata*, as noticed above, should be taken to connote slaves[22] as well. In its description of the main characteristics of the Kali age the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*[23] clearly refers to the rise of śūdras and slaves in social and economic status, while contrasting it with the situation[24] obtaining in the previous age. Whether, how far and in what way the decline of slavery was a feature representing the transition[25] from the ancient to the Middle Ages in the Indian context requires the examination of the relevant evidence on this point, which, however, is scanty and sometimes ambiguous too.

It is a well known fact that the extent, rigour and functional significance of slavery were not so much in ancient India as in ancient Greece[26] and Rome. Slavery, with its limited role and regional differences,[27] coexisted here with free labour, and also with some other forms of dependent labour. The greater part of the evidence brought to light on this point relates to domestic slavery which shows that the institution was never a major factor in the system of production in ancient India. However, the role of slave labour in this sphere was by no means negligible.

In earlier times the political and economic élite depended to some extent on slave labour for basic production, mostly agricultural production.[28] The *Arthaśāstra*[29] reveals some improvement in the general condition and property rights of slaves, which may, to some extent, have been due to the political unification, administrative uniformity, economic and social development along with the stabilization of the social system, and the consequent availability[30] of greater resources in land and labour in the Mauryan period. Buddhism also tended to soften the rigour of slavery.[31] But the comparatively loose political control[32] after the downfall of the Mauryan empire and the rude shock given to the socio-political structure by the foreign invasions of the Indo-Greeks, the Śakas, the

Kuṣāṇas, etc., created conditions which made it rather difficult to control the slaves. Under the circumstances, Manu (*c.* 200 B.C.-A.D. 200), who tried to reinforce the traditional social order, attempted to impose greater disabilities[33] and stricter bondage on the slaves—as compared with those envisaged in the *Arthaśāstra*—and to associate slavery mainly with the lower sections of society (mostly the śūdras).[34] But the Dharmaśāstra works following the *Manusmṛti* reflect, on the whole, a gradual weakening of slavery. In the expanding economy characterized[35] by open land resources, the development of the means of production, the fragmentation[36] of landed property, on account of partition, showing the break-up of large family communities, and the growth of a fairly large section of śūdra labourers bound by law and custom to serve the members of the higher *varṇas*, slavery, involving excessive subjection, tended gradually to become more or less superfluous.

Partly on account of the division of landed property and partly on account of political disturbances mainly caused by foreign invasions, the ancient families owning large landed estates and maintaining gangs of slaves and servants appear to have thinned out. The bewailing of the *Vāyu Purāṇa*[37] that in the Kali age *bhṛtyas* (servants and slaves)[38] would become destitute of masters well disposed towards them may be taken to refer to their disbandment under these circumstances. Those possessing small landholdings would not and also could not maintain many slaves and servants. For some of those, too, who continued to retain or acquired large landed estates, slave labour may have become unprofitable or undesirable owing to inefficiency or insubordination[39] of slaves, and, above all, to the comparatively easy availability of labour in the wake of the gradual deepening of the caste system.

Thus, not long before the middle of the first millennium A.D., there appears to have been gathering force a tendency towards the diminution of slavery, mainly under the impact of the social and economic factors. But the growing hold of some religious ideals, especially that of *ahimsā*[40] (non-violence), also appears to have been a significant factor contributing to the growth of this tendency which broadened out in the second half of the first millennium A.D. This tendency may, to some extent, be inferred from the evidence of the detailed provisions for the manumission of slaves in the *Nāradasmṛti*.[41] A tendency against forcible enslavement may be noticed in the *Śāntiparva* of the *Mahābhārata*,[42] and in the *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*[43] and *Nāradasmṛti*.[44] A verse in the *Mahābhārata*[45] indicates the tendency of releasing outright those enslaved in war on considerations of *dharma*. Nārada and Bṛhaspati[46] strongly deprecated the attitude of a wretch who became a slave by selling himself. Under the circumstances, the practice of enslavement may have tended to diminish, and the manumission of slaves may have become more common. Many freed men, as the evidence of some accounts of the Kali age noticed above suggests, may naturally have taken to agriculture (which was an occupation of the vaiśyas) as tenants, share-croppers or agricultural labourers. However, in the case of a large number of them, who could not fend for themselves, the ties of a narrow dependence on their masters appear to have substituted the bondage of excessive dependence. This is borne out by the evidence of the smṛtis of Nārada and Bṛhaspati. A verse occurring in both of them means that after manumission the freed man should be regarded as nourished or protected by the favour of his former master.[49] This suggests that the masters often provided for the sustenance of their ex-slaves, which could easily have been done by making them dependent peasants and farm-hands.

The semantic history of the word *kīnāśa*, though of course not very clear, is significant in this context. In connection with the partition of property among the sons of a brāhmaṇa, born of the four wives of different *varṇas*, Manu[49] had laid down that, along with vehicles, ornaments, etc., the *kīnāśa* (ploughman) should be given as an additional portion to the brāhmaṇa son. Here *kīnāśa* appears either as a slave[50] or as one not far removed from slavery, who tilled the fields. But in the *Nāradasmṛti*[51] *kīnāśa* and *dāsa* (slave) are separately mentioned in the context of incompetent witnesses. This may indicate that by the time of *Nāradasmṛti* slave or semi-slave ploughmen had mostly been transformed into agricultural labourers with only narrow dependence on their masters. (It was on account of their dependent status that they were not regarded as competent witnesses.) In the *Bṛhaspatismṛti*[52] *kīnāśas* are mentioned only as peasants and agricultural labourers, and the ploughmen as wage labourers.[53] In the *Vāyu*[54] and *Viṣṇudharmottara*[55] *Purāṇas, kīnāśas* are regarded as vaiśyas, obviously on account of their connection with agriculture as ploughmen and petty peasants,[56] and the comparative rise in their social status. However, we find lack of uniformity in this respect.[57]

The commentary of Bhāruci[58] furnishes clear evidence of the process of rise in the status of slaves, throwing further light on the tendency towards the diminution and decline of slavery. In spite of the different degrees of servitude and the qualified property rights[59] granted to a few types of slaves, excessive dependence and propertylessness had normally been deemed as the outstanding marks[60] of the status of slavery in *Mahābhārata*[61] and in the Dharmaśāstra[62] tradition from about the second century B.C. to the sixth century A.D.[63] But in his commentary on a verse of the *Manusmṛti* Bhāruci reached a position almost tantamount to divesting the term *dāsa* of its technical significance. Thus he made the sweeping statement:

> It is impossible to divert from a person what he has himself acquired (*yad upārjyate*). Consequently, their propertylessness must be understood to be pronounced in a secondary (or figurative) sense (*gauṇa eṣāṃ nirdhanatvam*).[64]

He further pointed out that extreme dependence ((*atyanta-para'antratva*) was associated only with born slaves (*garbha-dāsas*).[65] In this way, the property rights of all types of slaves and the diminishing servitude of all of them except the house-born slaves were recognized to a considerable extent by Bhāruci,[66] who reversed the dictum of Manu. This trend can be understood better if we come down to the ninth century and examine the evidence of the commentary of Medhātithi on the *Manusmṛti*.

Medhātithi recognized the proprietary rights of all kinds of slaves with some limitation.[67] Manu[68] had ordained that a śūdra slave could not be released from servitude even after his formal release. Commenting[69] on this, Bhāruci explained the servitude (*dāsyam*) of the śūdra as referring to his *varṇa*-duties, but Medhātithi set aside this dictum of Manu by regarding it as purely declamatory (*arthavāda*)[70]

Explaining the term *dāsa*, in a particular context, not as slave but as wage-labourer,[71] Medhātithi mentioned *bhaktadāsa*[72] as an example. Commenting on another verse dealing with the wages of labourers, he again referred to *bhaktadāsa*, not as slave for food, who was traditionally known as a type of slave, but as wage-labourer.[73] However, in the commentary on the verse dealing with the types of slaves, he explained the term in the traditional manner as one who had accepted slavery for obtaining food.[74] All this suggests that a number of *bhaktadāsas*, who were previously slaves for food, may have been transformed into or at least may have become akin to *bhaktācchādabhṛtas*, who are mentioned for the first time in the *Bṛhaspatismṛti*[75] as agricultural labourers receiving one-fifth of the produce, in addition to food and clothing. Thus, by the time of Medhātithi the approximation of *bhaktadāsas* to wage-labourers appears to have become a fairly marked feature. Many of the *bhaktadāsa* type of slaves may have gained freedom from slavery either as a matter of course or through formal manumission, but they may have continued to be bound to their masters as dependent[76] workers, and also to be designated by the same old term. Many free people, too, may have been absorbed into their ranks. However, sometimes the slaves may have even broken the ties of their servitude.

At any rate, it is clear that the term *bhaktadāsa*, which was derived from the vocabulary of slavery, began to denote a new kind of relationship also. Even the word *dāsa* began to be understood, though of course not uniformly, as workman receiving wages. On this point the evidence of the commentary of Medhātithi has already been noticed. In the tenth century Bhaṭṭotpala also explained the terms *dāsa*[77] and *dāsī*[78] as *karmakara* (servant, wage-earner, labourer) and *karmakarī* respectively in his commentary on the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* of Varāhamihira. Thus by the ninth and tenth centuries the class of people who could have been called *dāsa* (slave) in the real[79] sense must have considerably thinned out. The old connotation of the word *dāsa* did not disappear. But at the same time it began partly to change its meaning and partly to lose its technical significance.[80] The language of the age shows a considerable loosening[81] of terminology related to slavery, a situation in which the historian may discover some symptoms of social change.[82] The marked multivocality of the term *preṣya*[83] in the commentaries of Bhaṭṭotpala on the works of Varāhamihira also points to a change in the social situation.

The phenomena noticed above were linked up with the decline of slavery and the tendency of recruiting dependent workers instead of slaves. It goes without saying that all servants and labourers were regarded, in a general way, as unfree in relation to their masters. But the lack of freedom of the workers who were involved in the ties of dependence on their masters was of a special kind; it was much less in degree than slavery. Most probably it is for this type of workers that Medhātithi used the term *bhṛtidāsa* in the sense of a wage-labourer (*vaitanika*).[84] The words *bhṛti* and *dāsa* mean wages and slave respectively. A new term was thus coined by combining the two words obviously to suit the new conditions and, thus, to express the relationship characterized by a special dependence[85] of wage-labourers on their masters. The term *dāsakarmakara* occurring in some Buddhist texts and in the commentary of Bhaṭṭotpala on the *Bṛhajjātaka*[86] is also significant in this context: it appears to have been used for a dependent worker attached to his master, who was neither a slave (*dāsa*) nor a servant (*karmakara*) in the technical sense.

In ancient times failure to repay debts was an important source of slavery.[87] But Kātyāyana[88] (between A.D. 300 and 600) emphasized the desirability of making *karṣakas* (petty peasants and ploughmen), kṣatriyas, vaiśyas, and śūdras repay (a debt) by manual labour. Thus, unlike what we find in the earlier period, debt-bondage becomes a means of recruiting dependent labour (mainly agricultural labour): it was of course different from slave labour. Bhāruci[89] and Medhātithi[90] also prescribed that a poor debtor unable to repay his loan should be made to do manual labour, as a debt-bondsman,[91] towards the repayment of the same along with the interest. He further remarked that selling oneself into slavery for the repayment of debt was contrary to the injunction of the *śāstra*.[92] The commentary[93] of Śaṅkarācārya (*c.* A.D. 788-820) on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* reveals that many poor debtors may have been subjected to this kind of bondage, which on account of the unwillingness of the creditors to release them in their own interest, may have become more or less perpetual and hereditary.[94] Thus it appears to have played a significant role in the production relations characteristic of the early medieval period in the circumstances of the shortage of money and somewhat closed, agrarian economy. How the system of debt-bondage tended to become an instrument of exploiting the common folk may to some extent be inferred from the increased rates of interest on loans in cash and on consumption loans in kind[95] in this period. The provision for loan of land, which would increase by as many as eight times, was laid down by Kātyāyana and Pitāmaha.[96] This suggests that the more or less fettering practice of loan of land began to acquire growing prevalence from about the sixth century A.D. Such a practice may also have acquired in some cases the complexion of "temporary subinfeudation".[97]

Complete surrender of a destitute person to a master in a voluntary manner was, according to Nārada,[98] another source of slavery in ancient times. But partly under the impact of material conditions and partly owing to religious influence (especially that of Buddhism, as the *Mahāvastu*[99] reveals), there developed the ideal that the enslaving[100] of beings who are without protection or refuge is a sinful action and that the persons who do so go to hell. The commentary of Medhātithi mentions much more prominently the mode of voluntarily entering into a relation of dependence which was different from slavery. It was created between a weak or poor man belonging to the śūdra *varṇa* and a master, when the former approached the latter and submitted to him with the following words:

> I shall reside here, depending on you and placing myself under your protection. . . .This is the work that I shall do under you either as my duty or for some other purpose, such as saving myself from being pressed for service at the royal palace and so forth.[101]

The tangible object with which these people submitted to strong men was to gain means of livelihood and/or protection. But religious merit has also been mentioned as the intangible object for the śūdra. These dependent workers became thus attached to their masters and were under the obligation of residing near them.[102] In the *Laghu-Viṣṇusmṛti*[103] it is obviously this kind of submission (*ātma-nivedana*) which is recommended as *saṃskāra* for the śūdra. We have other pieces of evidence[104] relating to such contracts establishing ties of dependence between man and man, in which people other than the śūdras were also involved. Owing to political and economic insecurity during the early medieval period, this trend appears to have increased; sometimes the humble people may have even been subjected to this state of dependence.

Gifts of slaves are rarely mentioned in the inscriptions of the early medieval period. The emphasis on the ideals of chivalry and *dharmayuddha* in this period shows that, on the whole, wars also no longer remained a rich source of slavery. Explaining the term *dhvajāhṛta* (slave captured in war), Medhātithi[105] rejected an earlier dictum sanctioning the enslavement of kṣatriyas defeated in war and laid down that it implied only the seizure of the slave personnel of the defeated master (*svāminam jitvā tadiyo dāsa āhṛtaḥ*). This shows a tendency against the enslavement of people captured in war. However, we do find some evidence of the enslavement and sale of women captured by petty chiefs in predatory raids[106] and also of the enslavement af people captured in wars by the Arab[107] and Turk[108] invaders. The growing trade relations with the Arabs and Turks gave some fillip[109] to trade and traffic[110] in slaves.

The luxury and ostentation of the indigenous ruling aristocracy also led to an increase in the demand mostly for female slaves. In this connection the Prince of Wales Museum Stone Inscription[111] (eleventh century) from Dhar is quite significant. In as many as forty-six lines, divided into six sections, it gives a highly poetic description[112] of the personal charms, manners, dress, ornaments, and make-up of young girls from different regions of India—Kanauj,[113] Takka, Gauḍa, Mālava, and two other regions the names of which are lost in the lacunas. The term *molu* (price) occurs twice in the inscription[114] which apparently indicates that girls were meant for sale in the inter-regional slave market[115] of Dhar (Malwa region, Madhya Pradesh). But no specific price of anyone of them has been mentioned. It has only been said in one of the sections that no price could be fixed for them in this world (*ehi jagi athi no molu*).[116] Thus, each of them must have been sold at a high price. These girls are referred to not as slaves (*dāsīs*) but as those meant for *ulugaṃ* (*olagaṃ*)[117]—performance of service in a state of being attached to a master. Their position was obviously superior to that of *dāsīs* mentioned in some forms of documents in the *Lekhapaddhati*.[118] The possession of such serving girls was deemed as a prestige symbol associated with the ruling aristocracy.[119] However, considered as a whole, the extent and functional significance of slavery in its real sense, which were already quite limited, had largely declined[120] in Indian society during the early medieval period.

The question arises whether and how far the freed men or the transformed slaves, who became dependent tenants, share-croppers or agricultural laboures, can be equated with the serfs of medieval Europe. The evidence of the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* (sixth century A.D. or a little later)[121] indicates that some of them, in addition to other humble free people including peasants, could have been tied down to the bond of hereditary dependence between them and their masters, and obliged to work in particular places.[122] Peasants and artisans involved in hereditary dependence are mentioned at one place in the *Skanda Purāṇa*[123] also in connection with a legendary land grant. In this context the expression *āśrita hālika*[124] (dependent ploughman) occurring, along with *dāsa* and *dāsī*, in a tenth-century land grant of Chamba appears to be significant. The specific mention of the term *āśrita* (dependent) indicates that the dependence of this type of ploughman on his master was not of such a general kind as was in the case of ordinary wage-earners. It was a special type of relationship which can be better understood in the light of literary evidence noticed above. For a fuller picture all this evidence may be set along side that of the inscriptions of some other regions, which mention grants of lands or villages, along with peasants, artisans, etc., to brāhmaṇas or religious institutions.

Such agricultural labourers, including debt-bondsmen, as were subjected to restrictions on their mobility and were involved in the relationship of dependence from generation to generation cannot but be regarded as somewhat close to serfdom.[125] They may be regarded as semi-serfs, and some of them may have been ex-slaves. However, there is no evidence for the general prevalence of this phenomenon related to a pronounced degree of closed agrarian economy. It appears to have been confined to the regions which were economically backward and where the local supply of labour was scarce or unsteady.

At any rate, the more or less auxiliary role of slavery in the Indian context does not allow us to regard its diminution and decline as one of the most significant features of the social transition to the Middle Ages. The majority of the agricultural workers and others who were involved in the ties of various degrees of narrow dependence were obviously drawn from non-slaves belonging to the ranks of the śūdras, the aboriginal people absorbed into the society, and the lower strata of the vaiśyas. (The chief means of their recruitment were voluntary submission for gaining means of livelihood and/or protection,debt-bondage and also forcible subjection.) But the process of the decline of slavery does coincide with the growing vogue of another trend in the relations of production, which becomes noticeable from about the middle of the first millennium A.D. under the particular social, economic and political conditions.

The *Mahābhārata* and some early Purāṇas, as noticed above, refer to the degradation of the vaiśyas in the Kali age. In the light of some other pieces of evidence[126] this may be interpreted as the dependence and subjection of the previously free vaiśya peasant proprietors, in addition to the degradation of the vaiśya merchants and traders, in the wake of the decline of trade, commerce, money economy and urban life, the rise of the class of *sāmanta* chiefs and landed gentry, and the growing predominance of more or less closed agrarian economy. All these tendencies are also reflected in varying degrees in the accounts of the Kali age.

The early accounts of the Kali age clearly reveal that, owing to foreign invasions, the settlement of the foreigners, and the emergence of a section of them as well as some outlandish people as ruling aristocracy, the social order based on the *cāturvarṇya* was shaken to its very foundations.[126] These particular circumstances thus appear to have given a fillip to changes in economy, property relations, and social relation in general, which led to the rise of the tendencies setting off towards the Middle Ages. Some statements in the accounts of the *Mahābhārata* and early Purāṇas suggest a social conflict[128] which may have been associated with the stage of transition. This can be easily distinguished from another situation of social conflict in the later accounts[129] which arose after the tendencies of the Early Middle Ages had acquired a mature form. In the present context, however, we are concerned only with the former.

The decline of urban life and the growing preponderance of a more or less closed agrarian economy, as significant aspects of the transition from the ancient to the Middle Ages, may be studied on the basis of some statements in the accounts of the Kali age and *yugānta*. In the context of the description of an imaginary *yugānta* in the *Mahābhārata*, a verse[130] suggests that prosperous kingdoms and towns had gone out of existence. Another verse[131] visualizes that in the Kali age the sporting grounds and temples (*caityas*) of cities would become the abodes of beasts and birds of prey.

In this connection some of the Purāṇas refer to the emergence of *maṇḍala* in different regions and in cities. The term *maṇḍala* is of wide comprehension. Here it may even be taken to mean a deserted site, but the evidence of the *Harivṃaśa*[133] excludes this possibility. The *Nānārthasaṅgraha*[134] of Ajayapāla (A.D. 1075-1140), who probably hailed from Bengal, gives the first meaning of the term as group of villages. In the *Vaijayantī*[135] (eleventh century) of Yādavaprakāśa also *maṇḍala* has been defined in the same way, though the other meanings thereof are also given. In the *Narapatijayacaryāsvarodaya* Narahari (twelfth century) has also defined *maṇḍala* as group of villages (*maṇḍalaṃ grāmopalakṣitaṃ grāmasmūhaḥ*).[136]

The evidence of the *Mānasāra*[137] suggests that a *maṇḍala* was a comparatively small *janapada*, obviously consisting of a group of villages, which was held by a petty ruling chief (*kṣudrabhūpāla*), known as *maṇḍaleśa*, who occupied the sixth place in descending order in the *sāmanta* hierarchy. The number of such petty chiefs was bound to increase in course of time. *Maṇḍalas* as groups of villages held by *sāmanta* chiefs, and also officers having the status of *sāmantas*, became common in many regions of India in the post-Gupta period.[138] By the ninth century A.D., the rank of a chief or ruler in the *sāmanta* hierarchy began to be understood mainly in terms of the number of villages over which he exercised lordship.[139] As pointed out by G.C. Pande,[141] this even led to the tendency of increasing or inflating the number of villages in the possession of ambitious chiefs and rulers.

In the developed stage of the *sāmanta* system the term *maṇḍala* began to be used in a restricted sense[142] also, denoting a fixed number of villages, the lord of which was called *māṇḍalika* or *mahāmaṇḍaleśvara*, who enjoyed a high status in the *sāmanta* hierarchy. But in the Kali age sections of the early Purāṇas it appears to have been used in a generic sense[142] for the holdings of *sāmantas*, petty chiefs, and even the upper landed gentry, each of which consisted of a group of villages, representing a circle of authority. Many of these small groups of villages, and often even individual villages, held by chiefs and landlords, may have tended to become more or less closed units of economy.[143]

Thus, it may be said in a general way that the evidence noticed above indicates the growing predominance of the rural set-up and closed economy, the growth of a ruling landed aristocracy together with the increasing hold of the *sāmanta* system, and the fact that many cities tended to be reduced to villages under the existing conditions.

Turning to the evidence of other texts, we find the account of the age of degeneration in the *Vividhatīrthakalpa* (V.S. 1388/*c.* A.D. 1332). Though a comparatively late work, it draws upon the earlier traditions. The decline of urban life has very aptly been summed up in this Jain text as *nayarāṇi gāmabhūāṇi hohinti.*[144] This statement, evidently referring to the age of transition for the ancient to the Middle Ages, suggests that many cities began to dwindle into villages under the prevailing conditions.

Attention to a significant historical evidence has been drawn by G.C. Pande,[145] who has clearly pointed out the terminological ambivalence in respect of the settlement pattern of the Vrji capital in the account of Hiuen Tsang, the great Buddhist Chinese traveller who visited India in A.D. 629-45. While giving an account of the celebrated ancient city, which was in ruins, the traveller says that it had a population of three thousand houses.[146] However, as pointed out by Professor Pande, Hiuen Tsang expressed his opinion that it might be called "a town or a village".[147] It appears that by the seventh century the town, in spite of its fairly large population, had almost lost the appearance and internal structure of a city. This may have been the case with many other cities[148] also on account of the decline in the rhythm of economic life.

Nigamas, too, which as settlements were urban centres[149] of commerce and artisan industry, began to be interpreted as villages[150] in some texts of the post-Gupta period. In the inscription[151] of Viṣṇuṣeṇa (between A.D. 589 and 605), one such settlement is mentioned as *vaṇiggrāma*. In a Buddhist account of the age of decadence we find reference to the desertion of urban centres: the introductory prose narrative of the *Mahāsupina Jātaka* contains a prophecy of the Buddha that in the age of decline, which would also witness the declining state of Buddhism, *nigamas*[152] would be deserted by people harassed by overtaxation. As urban guilds of merchants and/or artisans also, the *nigamas* suffered a decline. In many works of the post-Gupta period, for example, *Samarāiccakahā*, *Kuvalayamālā*, etc., the term *nigama* is conspicuous by its absence. The seals[153] of *nigamas* also disappear after the Gupta period.

Many cities of the early medieval period may have been reduced in area and population. For example, according to Josiah C. Russel,[154] even Kanauj, the premier city of India in that age, appears to have been smaller than Pāṭaliputra. This feature may have been partly connected with the decline[155] in population (including urban population) in many regions of northern India, and eastern Deccan, especially in the post-Gupta period. But there is need for further archaeological discoveries in this connection also.

The evidence of the accounts of Kali age, supplemented with the data gleaned from other sources, can thus help us in identifying some main features of the decline of urban life in the phase of transition referred to above. These are the destruction and desertion of some cities, and the languishing of others which continued to exist. The causes of these are not specifically given in the accounts. However, the context suggests that the circumstances responsible for them were mainly economic, but to some extent political also. Thus we find references to famines, insecurity caused by foreign invasions and internal disturbances, the emergence of petty principalities and landed estates, the phenomenon of a closed agrarian set-up, the rigours of forced labour and overtaxation which also sometimes compelled people to leave the cities and go to the rural areas, the decline of trade and commerce and of the section of society associated with them, and the shortage of money showing depression of economy.

A study of the destiny of the towns of northern India, mainly on the basis of archaeological evidence, by R.S. Sharma[156] suggests that a large number of them were deserted, abandoned or even destroyed in the Gupta and post-Gupta phases, though some of them continued to exist in a poor state. Further archaeological discoveries and historical investigations are needed in this connection. Then again, the question of methodology[157] is involved in the coordination of the literary and archaeological evidence. However, the study in itself is revealing. The decline of foreign and internal trade after the downfall of the Kuṣāṇa empire,[158] the paucity of precious metals, the Hūṇa invasion (only to a limited extent), and deforestation of the hinterland in the post-Gupta period, leading to paucity of rainfall, have been regarded by Professor Sharma[159] as the main factors responsible, in varying degrees, for this state of affairs.

The phenomenal growth of ruling landed aristocracy and the petty landed estates has been pointedly mentioned in some Purāṇic accounts as one of the most significant features, which was evidently connected with all major socio-economic aspects of the phase of transition. Thus the *Viṣṇu*[160] and the *Bṛhannāradīya*[161] *Purāṇas* state that whosoever possesses chariots, horses and elephants will pass himself off as a ruler in the Kali age. The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* further states that the weak and poor man will have to serve the strong and rich man as his master.[162] Such a situation must have favoured the growth[164] of landed lordships and estates.

Significantly there is no specific mention of the estates of religious donees in these accounts.[165] All this was bound to pave the way for the emergence of many local units of economy with restrictions[166] on the mobility of peasants, artisans and other humble folk. In the context of the duties of the Kali age a great insistence began to be laid on the observance of local customs (*grāmācāra*[167] etc.), and long journeys and sea-voyages began to be tabooed.[168]

The emergence of petty principalities and estates characterized by relatively closed agrarian economy and the political and economic domination of the *sāmanta*[169] chiefs (especially after the Gupta period) could not but have contributed in some measure to urban decline. The *Viṣṇu* and the *Bṛhannāradīya Purāṇas* refer to people, evidently including the city-dwellers, leaving their places of habitation and going to the rural areas rich in wheat and barley on account of famines and the harassment of overtaxation and oppression.[170] The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*[171] pointedly refers to rulers extorting exorbitant *śulka* (ferry duties, tolls, transit duties sales tax, etc.) from the merchants and the latter giving up trade and commerce in the Kali age. The urban ownership of land may have also been affected under such conditions.[172]

The examples of some other regions of the world may throw further light on this aspect. Thus in the phase of the decline of the Roman empire the development of the seigneurial estate divided the city from the countryside. The estates (*oikos*) of the late empire tended to become closed units with natural economy as the dominant feature.[173] Usually the farm labourers could not be released for the cities. This was an important factor leading to the decline of many cities in the Roman world.[174] A study[175] of the socio-political and cultural life of Mistra, a typically feudal town of Late Byzantium, by I. Medvedev has revealed that the economic and political domination of the feudal lords was associated there also with a low level of artisan industry and trade, absence of self-govenment, weakness of the urban elements, and insularity.

It is sometimes thought that the growth of numerous seats of political power may have brought into being so many urban centres on account of the presence of a group of consumers[176] at each of them. This view loses sight of the fact that for the growth of flourishing urban settlements the basic prerequisite is the sustaining economic base, and not merely the presence of consumers. The growing trend of closed agrarian economy was of course not favourable to the development of such a base. Then again, the insecurity of routes and the disturbed political conditions in the first phase of the early medieval period, including the phase of transition, were decidedly unfavourable to trade and commerce, and consequently to the development of cities.[177] Under these circumstances, some of the seats of political power may have developed, to some extent, into consumption-oriented,[178] local distributing centres, but they could hardly have become flourishing cities in the real sense of the term. The extant ovens in the ruins of Nalanda University can hardly warrant the assumption of the existence of manufactories as a general feature of the urban settlements in that age. However, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries we find some evidence of the re-development of urban life.[179]

The *Mahābhārata*[180] and the *Bṛhannāradīya Purāṇa*[181] (ninth century A.D) state that the people of all the four *varṇas* will be left only with a small amount of wealth in the Kali age. It is stated in the same context that even the rich people will be able to accumulate[182] only a small amount of wealth and will thus be reduced to the status of beggars.[183] The *Vividhatīrthakalpa*,[184] which of course draws upon earlier traditions, states that whatever the people earn through different means will be drawn into the coffers of the rulers. All this suggests not only general poverty, including the failing fortunes of many rich merchants, and overtaxation, but also shortage of money, especially good money.

The *Viṣṇu* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇas* clearly state in an exaggerated manner that even such a paltry amount as one-eighth of a *paṇa*[185] or even a *kākaṇika*[186] (twenty cowries) will mean much for the people in the Kali age. A pointed reference to shortage of coins occurs in the introductory prose narrative of the *Mahāsupina Jātaka* in the garb of a prophecy of the Buddha about the advent of the age of decadence with the setting in of the process of decline of Buddhism. In that phase, it is stated, "the kingdoms shall grow weak...the kings shall grow poor and niggardly; the foremost (*issaro*) among them shall have no more than 100,000 pieces of money (*satasahassa-mattā kahāpaṇā*) in his treasury."[187] In this connection it may be noted that *kahāpaṇa*, or *kārṣāpaṇa*, coins were made of gold,[188] silver[189] as well as copper.[190]

In the light of this, the paucity of coins, suggesting their limited issue in the post-Gupta period, appears to be significant. The paucity of precious metals,[191] the decline of trade and commerce, and political insecurity, which are mentioned in the accounts of Kali age, may be regarded as some of the main factors responsible for this state of affairs. But there may have also been the desirability of reducing or keeping at a low level the circulation of money under the conditions characterized by the growth of the closed local agrarian economy and land ed lordships. One may be reminded in this context of the policy of the kings of Kashmir. They tried to squeeze[192] all the surplus produce from the peasants, lest the latter might become turbulent Ḍāmaras capable of causing trouble to *sāmantas* as well as the king, after acquiring wealth mainly by selling[193] their agricultural produce. Thus, the limited issue and even non-issue of coins in the post-Gupta period can also be connected, to some extent, with the need of reducing the scope of commodity-money relations in order to check peasant insurrections and the emergence[194] of chiefs, and to buttrress the existing set-up. Perhaps the impact of money economy, giving rise to commodity-money relations, was not viewed by the ruling class as conducive to their interests under the existing conditions.[195] But we do not find evidence of the wide prevalence of the extreme form of natural economy in the medieval Indian complex. It appears that to some extent commodity and natural economic relations existed simultaneously,[196] which, however, circumscribed each other in varying degrees in different regions and localities.

Closely connected with the rise of a class of ruling landed aristocracy and landed gentry, and the emergence of units of closed economy was the *phenomenon of peasant subjection*. The *Mahābhārata* mentions the decline of the free vaiśya peasants as well as merchants in the Kali age, and further states that the *janapadas* will be harassed by forced labour (*viṣṭi*)[197] and overtaxation.[198] While referring to the impoverished condition of the peasants in this context, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*[199] makes a sweeping statement that they will be reduced to the status of beggars, and contrasts this situation with the prosperity[200] of peasantry in the previous age. The *Skanda Purāṇa*[201] also refers to the exploitation and subjection of the lower peasantry by the rulers as one of the main features of the Kali age.

Further light on the subjection of peasantry is forthcoming from the prose narrative[202] of *Mahāsupina Jātaka.* Here we get, in the form of the Buddha's prophecy based on the interpretation of the dreams of a king, a vivid, though of course exaggerated, account of the exploitation of peasants and artisans by the rulers through forced labour and oppressive taxes. This has been regarded as representing an important aspect of the transition[203] to the age of decadence including the declining state of Buddhism.[204] The account in the text runs as under:

> For in days to come the world shall decay;...its kings shall grow poor. Then shall these kings in their need set the whole of the country-folk to work for them; for kings' sake shall the toiling folk[205] *leaving their own work*, sow grain and pulse, and keep watch and reap and thresh and garner; for the kings' sake shall they plant sugarcanes, make and drive sugar-mills, and boil down the molasses; for the kings' sake shall they lay out flower gardens and orchards, and gather in the fruits. And as they gather in all the diverse kinds of produce they shall fill the royal garners to overflowing, not giving, so much as a glance at their own empty barns at home.[206]

Thus, it is said, the kings would resort to "crushing their subjects like sugarcanes in a mill and . . . taxing them even to the last farthing."[207] As already noticed, the decline of money economy and the desertion of urban and rural settlements have also been referred to in this context.

Forced labour of the non-slaves, by itself, cannot be said to be altogether specific to the medieval complex. In the Indian context we find some evidence of its use in earlier[208] times also. But, as revealed by the literary and epigraphic evidence, the emergence of forced labour as a fairly widespread phenomenon comes into view in the period from the fourth to the seventh century A.D.[209] In the fifth century A.D. Buddhaghoṣa affirmed the truth of what has been described in the *Mahāsupina Jātaka* in a way which shows that the operation of the tendencies viewed as the indicators of transition (including the tendency of exacting forced labour from peasants and artisans for basic production) was becoming evident to the thinking people of that period.[210] However, it should not be lost sight of that the Jātaka account contains an element of exaggeration. The sixth century A.D. represents a landmark when Varāhamihira[211] mentioned for the first time a section of workmen who were known as *viṣṭikara*[212] or *viṣṭikṛt*.[213] They were especially connected with forced labour and were deemed to be born under certain astrological afflictions which were considered to be less severe than those in the case of slaves.[214] We have already seen that the trend of the decline and diminution of slavery also becomes clearly marked round about this period. Thus this trend appears to have coincided with the growing vogue of forced labour. The *Bṛhajjātaka* of Varāhamihira gives the planetary combinations only for three[215] types of slaves—one who had surrendered himself to slavery for gaining subsistence (*abhyupagama*), purchased slave, and house-born slave—in the descending order of hierarchy. This may be contrasted with the list of fifteen types of slaves in the *Nāradasmṛti*[216] which throws light on the earlier conditions.

The evidence of the *Mahāsupina Jātaka*, noticed above, reveals the role of occasional forced labour in the system of production, especially agricultural production. This forced labour was exacted from the peasants. The *Sārāvali* of Kalyāṇavarmā (ninth century), who appears to have flourished in Gujarat[217], throws some futher light on this point. In connection with the influence of a planetary configuration called *halayoga*, mention has been made, in this text, of the poor petty peasants who were *preṣyas*[218] (Elsewhere in this text *preṣyas* are differentiated from slaves and servants.)[219] In the commentary of Bhaṭṭotpala on the *Bṛhajjātaka*[220] of Varāhamihira, *parapreṣyakaras*, or *preṣyas*, and *viṣṭikaras* (those engaged in forced labour) are grouped together in the same context. The evidence of the commentary of Medhātithi[221] tends to show that by the ninth century the ploughmen began to be viewed as *bhāravāhakas* (carriers of loads) who were especially connected[222] with *viṣṭi* (forced labour). Then again, the *Mahāsupina Jātaka* refers to making sugar-mills by the people subjected to forced labour. In the *Bṛhajjātaka*[223] petty artisans and *viṣṭikaras* are also grouped together, both being regarded as influenced by the weak position of Mercury in the two signs—Capricorn and Aquarius—of Saturn. This may give some idea of the role of forced labour in industry.[224]

With the growing vogue of forced labour, non-economic compulsion began to be exercised on free wage-labourer[225] also. In earlier times the *Arthaśāstra*,[226] the *Manusmṛti*[227] and the *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*[228] laid down the provision of a fine for a labourer unable or unwilling to do a stipulated work or failing to keep up the contract with his employer for whatever reason. But from the time of the *Nāradasmṛti* onwards the Dharmaśāstra works began to lay a considerable emphasis on forcing, in the first instance, the labourers who became unwilling for some reason to do a particular work after having promised to do it.[229] However, a deterrent fine[230] was also provided for those who would not do their work even after compulsion. This compulsion appears to have become inevitable in the relatively closed units of agrarian economy under the conditions characterized by the shortage of money.

In short, what we notice about forced labour of the non-slaves, including peasants and artisans, in relation to the transition from antiquity to the Middle Ages, is its relatively increasing prevalence and dimension in course of the development of the socio-economic and political structures of the *sāmanta* system.[231] This system may be understood as a sort of feudal complex.[232] Through its dimension and also through the type of configuration in which it occurred, forced labour, thus, appears to have become an essential or rather a more or less specific element of the complex. However, in its extent, nature and functional significance, it was much less developed than what we find in medieval Europe.

The accounts of the age of decadence give the impression that forced labour was exacted from peasants, artisans, etc., only by the kings—a state of affairs which may appear to lend support to the hypothesis of K.A. Wittfogel that in agro-hydraulic civilizations, "corvée labour is imposed on the mass of population by the state".[233] But this appearance is created owing to the sketchy nature of these accounts. In fact, there is clear evidence to show that forced labour was imposed not only by the state but also by others, especially the landed aristocracy, including the holders of land grants.

The Jain account of the age of degeneration, as contained in the *Vividhatīrthakalpa*[234] of Jinaprabha Sūri (fourteenth century) is in the form of Mahāvīra's prophecy. Here also we get reference to the development of more or less the same tendencies as noticed above, extending over a period of several centuries till the predicted birth of Kakki (Kalki)[235] at Pāṭaliputra in the fourteenth century of the Vikrama era. This evidence brings out more pointedly the dependence and subjection of the impoverished peasantry in the following words:

> *jamadaṇḍa—samā rāyāṇo . . .*
> *masāṇa—rūvā gāmā . . .*
> *dāsappāyā kuḍumbiṇo.*[236]

According to this, the age of decadence would witness the phenomena of kings behaving like the rod of Yama, the villages turning into cremation-grounds, and the peasants being reduced to a status resembling that of slaves. Obviously, this overdrawn account cannot be taken at its face value. But, viewed in the light of the pieces of evidence noticed above, it does point to a situation brought about in the wake of the subjection and exploitation of the peasantry by the ruling class—a situation in which many free peasants also may have been reduced to the status of dependence.[137] The term *dāsappāyā* (like slaves)[238] has been used here to give a pointed expression to the idea of the dependence and subjection[239] of peasantry, and it appears to be significant in the light of our discussion of the decline of slavery and the emergence of a new trend in the relations of production. Needless to say, all peasants could not have been reduced to such a state of bondage as the term implies. However, the cumulative evidence tends to show that a number of them had an unfree status between slavery and freedom. It is probably such people that are meant when the *Bṛhannāradīya Purāṇa* speaks of making men attached to the plough (*baddhahālas*)[240] carry on cultivation in the Kali age. Then again, there were those impoverished peasants who, as we have seen above, were involved in a more or less perpetual debt-bondage. All this further tends to strengthen the probability of the emergence of a section of dependent peasants who were in some respects close to serfdom. But the number of such peasants does not appear to have been large.

A somewhat parallel tendency of peasant subjection was operating in the ancient Near East in the context of the emergence of the socio-economic complex of the Middle Ages. A study[241] of the rural community in this region has revealed that the setting in of the Middle Ages after the end of antiquity was marked not so much by the slave production ceasing to play the leading role in economy as by the dependence, exploitation and subjection of the previously free peasants, which became the leading form of production. This view cannot be said to hold good necessarily for all situations in different regions. Nevertheless, it poses a problem in the study of the medieval complex outside Europe. It brings out a distinctive feature of the Middle Ages, which may be noticed to some extent in the Indian context also. The system of a sort of bondage or subjection of peasants, as noticed above, rested upon the presence of a sizable ruling landed aristocracy and landed gentry.[242]

The changes during the Middle Ages of Indian history can of course be studied in some measure on the basis of the historical examination of many other pieces of literary and archaeological evidence. But the question here is of identifying in a historical perspective the representative facts and tendencies, and for this purpose it also becomes necessary to investigate the traditions embodying the contemporary or near-contemporary social awareness of the changes. From this point of view the early accounts of the Kali age appear to be quite significant. However, these accounts are often vague, sketchy, and full of exaggerations and they contain elements of more than one configuration.[243] Further, they are deeply coloured by religious ideology: the ancient authors did not conceive and analyze contemporary changes in economic terms. Modern history-writing, therefore, should not be limited to what the ancients themselves perceived.

Notwithstanding their limitations as a source of history, the accounts of Kali age in the Hindu and Jain traditions, together with the descriptions of the age of decadence in the Buddhist tradition which belongs to the contemporary or near contemporary milieu, enable us (when correlated with other pieces of literary and archœological evidence) to have an idea of the mainstream of the transition from antiquity to the Middle Ages in the Indian context. That they had some contemporary reference has now become evident in the light of our discussion. These accounts suggest that in course of the transition to the new age, which they picture as the age of degeneration, some important changes were taking place in the social structure within the framework of the *cāturvarṇya* (the system of the four *varṇas*)—a sizable section of the śūdras, including slaves, rising in social and economic status after getting associated with agriculture mostly as petty dependent peasants and farmhands, and a section of the vaiśyas (especially free vaiśya peasants belonging to the lower strata) descending to their level. All this was taking place mainly under the impact of the economic forces and particular situation of social conflict. The decline and diminution of slavery, hinted at in a few accounts, also appears to have been involved, to some extent, in the social transition. Then again, the impact of foreign invasions and the settlement of the foreigners and some outlandish people as ruling aristocracy are also found to have had something to do with the social transformation and emergence of the tendencies setting off towards the Middle Ages. This trend of social transformation appears to have acquired an added significance in the circumstances which are sometimes pointedly referred to (in these accounts) as characterized by the decline of trade, commerce and urban life; the shortage of money; the phenomenon of the growing agrarian character of society and the relatively closed units of local economy; and the emergence of a sizable ruling landed aristocracy and landed gentry, leading to the fragmentation of political authority. A considerable emphasis has been laid in these accounts on the development of a situation showing a trend which was viewed as most characteristic of the relations of production in the phase of transition to the new age. This trend was signified by the subjection of the lower peasantry, involving forced labour of more than one variety exacted from them, and a marked degree of dependence of a section of impoverished peasants including those who were under a more or less perpetual debt-bondage.

All these phenomena can be independently known, to some extent, from other sources too, and some of them may of course be traced back to quite early times. But what the accounts of the age of decadence mostly tend to show is that in their dimension and magnitude, they ushered in a new age and thus became more or less specific to a particular social economic and political format which represented a sort of feudal complex.

However, the tendencies and phenomenon noticed above could not have emerged to the same degree everywhere. In fact, these accounts only give a generalized picture bringing out the main aspects and the essence of the social situation. The study of the details including the regional and chronological variations, and also of the exceptions, in this regard, still remains a desideratum.

The early epigraphic evidence bearing on the Kali age throws some light on the central phase of the period of social transition, though of course it does not give sufficient details. A few inscriptions of some Pallava kings (third or fourth century A.D.) describe them as "always ready to extricate *dharma* that had sunk down (*avasanna*) owing to the evil effects of the Kali age"[244]. By the sixth century A.D. the horror of the Kali age, as accentuated by the actual conditions, appears to have acquired threatening proportions. While eulogizing the ephemeral exploits of Yaśodharman—including his victory over the Hūṇa ruler Mihirakula—in the declining days of the extensive empire reared by the Gupta overlords (*Guptanāthaiḥ*), the Mandasor stone pillar inscription[245] (*c.* A.D. 525-35) speaks of the age as the ravisher of proper conduct (*vinayamuṣiyuge*). The particular historical situation has obviously been conceived here in terms of the conditions of the Kali age. The earliest known dated record in which the spirit of the ruling class appears to have been crushed by the experience of Kali age is the Haraha stone inscription (Vikrama Year 611 = A.D. 533-4)[246] of the Maukhari Iśānavarman. Out of the twenty-three verses of the inscription six refer to the agitated conditions characterized by an overwhelming social and political crisis deemed to have been brought about by Kali[247] in that period. The rulers of the dynasty were eulogized for attempting to restore the norms of society, which were viewed as being submerged on account on the heightened effects of the Kali age. The socio economic and political structures of the *sāmanta* system, so characteristic of the early medieval complex, become increasingly clear from the sixth century A.D. onward.[248]

Though some trends[249] paving the way for transition from antiquity to the Middle Ages were operating from earlier times, the central phase of the transition, as the epigraphic evidence suggests, appears to have commenced from the sixth century, especially from the declining days of the Gupta empire. This is further borne out by the Buddhist account of *Kaliyuga* (Kali age) in the last section of the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*[250] which clearly appears to have reference to the actual historical conditions. According to this, the Kali age characterized by disturbances in the social structure (*cāturvarṇya*) and the decline of Buddhism would set in after the period of the Guptas followed by the rule of the Mleccha kings (evidently the Hūṇas)[251] and spell of wafare.

The history of the development of the ideas centring upon the Kali age reveals that the *Parāśarasmṛti* (between A.D. 600 and 900), showing a clear tendency of breaking with the antiquity, constitutes a landmark[252] in the social history of India. After declaring that rules of *dharma*, enunciated by Manu, Gautama, and Śaṅkha-Likhita, were no longer valid for his age,[253] Parāśara set out to write especially for the Kali age (Iron Age). In the same atmosphere appear the recommendations of *deśācāra*[254] and *grāmadharma*,[255] and the rules of *kalivarjya*[256] (actions to be given up in the Kali age), with an emphasis *inter-alia* on localism, in the *Bṛhannāradīya Purāṇa*. Thus, broadly speaking, by the end of the period extending from the seventh to the ninth century, which witnessed the deliberate enunciation of the rules[257] of *dharma* by Parāśara and the author of the *Bṛhannāradīya Purāṇa* to suit the changed conditions, the forces and tendencies signifying the transition[258] appear to have matured[259] into the medieval complex. However, in spite of what we notice in the ideological field, the socio-economic difference between the antiquity and the Middle Ages was not so much marked as that between the Middle Ages and the modern age.[260] Then again, many traditions of ancient times continued without much of perceptible change.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1] According to P.V. Kane (*History of Dharmaśāstra*, iii, 2nd edn, Poona, 1973, 895), the theory of the four *yugas* had been completely developed by the fourth century A.D. at the latest.

[2] Cf. Santo Mazzarino, *The End of the Ancient World* (London, 1966), chapter I.

[3] *Mahābhārata* (Critical Edition, Poona, 1971), 3.186; 3.188. *Vāyu P.*, 58; *Viṣṇu P.*, 6.1, 2; *Brahmāṇḍa P.*, II. 3.74; *Matsya P.*, 273; *Bhāgavata P.*, 12.2.3; etc. Cf. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, iii, 892 ff. These accounts are often of the nature of prophecy about the future degeneration in the Kali age.

[4] B N.S. Yadava, "Some Aspects of the Changing Order in India During the Śaka-Kuśāṇa Age", *Kuśāṇa Studies*, ed, G R. Sharma (Allahabad, 1968), p. 75ff.

[5] The account of the Kali age in the *Mahābhārata* is one of the earliest of this nature. Though it refers to earlier events and tendencies, it breathes, on the whole, an atmosphere characterized by the decline of urban life, which, in the present state of our knowledge, cannot be assigned to a period prior to the fourth century A.D. (For the beginnings of the decay of cities in northern India, see R.S. Sharma, "Decay of Gangetic Towns in Gupta and Post-Gupta Times", *JIH*, *Golden Jubilee Volume*, (1973), p. 135 ff. See also R.K. Dwivedi, "Critical Study of the Changing Social Order at *Yugānta*, or the End of the Kali Age", *D.D. Kosambi Commemoration Volume*, ed, L. Gopal (Varanasi, 1977), p. 290. The date of the composition of the Purāṇas is also not certain. However, with the exception of the *Bhāgavata*, which is regarded by Kane as somewhat late, the early Purāṇas, referred to above, have generally been assignted to the period extending from the fourth to the sixth century A.D.

[6] Santo Mazzarino, op. cit., p. 173.

[7] *antyā madhyā bhaviṣyanti madhyāścāntīvasāyinaḥ, īdṛśo bhavitā loko yugānte paryupasthite*, *Mahābhārata*, 3.188.19. *Yugānta* in this context has a reference not only to the non-historical category of the end of the Kali age but also to a historical situation of change. A more or less similar verse occurs in the section dealing with the Kali

age in the *Harivamśa*, i (Poona, 1969), 116.17 See also *Brahma P.*, 231.15.

[8] In his commentary on the *Manusmṛti* (VII, 66), Bhāruci (between A.D. 500 and 650) has also explained the term *antyaḥ* as *śūdraḥ*, *Bhāruci's Commentary on the Manusmṛti*, ed. J.D M. Derrett (Wiesbaden, 1975) i, 99. The editor is, however, inclined to place him about A.D. 600-50.

[9] *Viṣṇu P.*, 6.1.36. For the decline of of the vaiśyas see also *Matsya P.* 143.39.

[10] *Viṣṇu P.*, tr., Wilson, p. 489.

[11] *Skanda P.*, 3.2.39.291 f. It is a late Purāṇa, but the tradition contained in it appears to be earlier.

[12] *śūdraḥ kṛṣivaṇikkriyayākṛtārthaḥ*, *Daśāvatāracarita*, 1.29. This evidence in the account of Kṣemendra reflects the later phase of the early Middle Ages (B.N.S. Yadava, "Problem of Interaction between Socio-Economic Classes in Early Medieval Complex", *IHR*, iii, no. 1, 1976, 58). Nevertheless, we can work backwards on the basis of a better known evidence of later times.

[13] Cf. R.S. Sharma, "Problem of Transition from Ancient to Medieval in Indian History", *IHR*, i. no. 1 (1974), 4. In this context the changed conception of the duties of the śūdras is significant. Thus, agriculture as the duty of the śūdras finds mention in the account of Hiuen Tsang and some law-books of the first phase of the early medieval period (*SCNI* p. 14). Needless to say, agriculture was previously regarded as a regular occupation of the vaiśyas. However, the *Mahābhārata* and the Purāṇas refer to śūdras becoming rulers also in the Kali age.

[14] The peasantry includes agricultural labourers, who depend on landlords for the largest part of their livelihood or the totality of it, Eric R. Wolf, ***Peasant and Peasant Societies***, ed, Teodor Shanin (Reprint, Penguin Modern Sociology Readings, 1976), p. 268.

[15] The extensive use of iron, bringing more areas of land under cultivation, and the increase in the number of śūdras (partly on account of the assimilation of the tribal people) were the most significant features of this development, R.S. Sharma, *Śūdras in Ancient India* (Delhi, 1958), p. 234f; D.D. Kosambi, *The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India* (London, 1965), p. 171.; Suvira Jaiswal, Presidential Address (Section-1), Indian History Congress, 38th session, 1977, p. 14; B.N.S. Yadava, "Some Aspects of the Changing Order in India During the Śaka-Kuṣāṇa Age", op. cit., p. 83ff.; *SCNI*, p. 41.

[16] *Mahābhārata*, 3. 188.27.

[17] Ibid. 3. 188.23.

[18] Ibid. 3. 188.27.

[19] *śūdrā dhanārjakāḥ*, ibid. 3 186.26.

[20] Ibid. 3. 188.64.

[21] These people were regarded as *anāśrita* (not dependent on others): see, for example, Bhāruci on *Manu*, X 124, etc.; Medhātithi on *Manu*, VII. 415.

[22] While commenting on a verse of the *Bṛhajjātaka* (12.15) of Varāhamihira, Bhaṭṭotpala also explained the term *antyavṛttiḥ* as *dāsavṛtti śūdravṛtyarthaḥ*. On the whole, slavery was thought to be proper for the śūdras; cf. S.C. Bhattacharya, *Some Aspects of Indian Society from c. 2nd Century B C. to c. 4th Century A.D.* (Calcutta, 1978), p. 193.

[23] *śūdradāśottarāḥ prajāḥ*, *Bhāgavata P.*, 12.3.25. A few of the commentaries of this text have accepted the reading *dāsottarāḥ* also (*Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa*, ed, K.S. Sastri, Ahmedabad, 1975, pp. 60, 61). Hazra has assigned this Purāṇa to the sixth century A.D. (*Studies in the Purāṇic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs*, Delhi, 1975, p. 177). But, according to Kane, it is not earlier than the ninth century (*History of Dharmaśāstra*, v. pt. ii, 899). Anyway, it throws light on the first phase of the early medieval period. The process of the śūdras becoming increasingly free from the obligation to serve as slaves appears to have been gathering force in the Gupta period (R.S. Sharma, "The Origins of Feudalism in India", *JESHO*, i. pt 3. 320).

[24] *varṇāḥ, kṣatradvijottarāḥ*, *Bhāgavata P.*, 12 3.23.

[25] In Europe, however, the slave rose in social status to become an unfree serf, and this was one of the most important features signifying the transition from antiquity to the Middle Ages, Max Weber, *The Agrarian Sociology of Ancient Civilizations*, tr., R.I. Frank (London, 1976), p. 400. While it would be unhistorical to expect an identical situation in the Indian context, it would be none the less so to absolutize the uniqueness of ancient Indian society.

[26] As rightly pointed out by Romila Thapar, the Indian *dāsa* was not identical with the Greek *doulos*, *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*, 2nd edn (Delhi, 1973), p. 89. However some recent studies have revealed that the Greeks used the term *doulos* "to cover a range of statuses" (M.I. Finley, *The Use and Abuse of History*, London, 1975, p. 63).

[27] D.R. Chanana. *Slavery in Ancient India* (Delhi, 1960), p. 111.

[28] Ibid., pp. 41ff., 95, 110; *The Kauṭilīya Arthaśāstra*, ed, R. P. Kangle (Bombay, 199), pt i, 2.24.3. Kangle's rendering of the *dāsa* as serf appears to be inaccurate here (ibid. tr., R.P., Kangle, pt ii, Bombay, 1972, 149).

[29] *The Kauṭilīya Arthaśāstra*, pt ii, 3.14; Chanana, op. cit., pp. 108, 109. But Kauṭilya cannot have been the author of the whole *Arthaśāstra* T.R. Trautmann, *Kauṭilya and the Arthaśāstra* (Leiden, 1971), p. 175.

[30] *Arthaśāstra*, II. 1 (section on the settlement of the countryside), 15.1.1. But the expansion of resources in land, without the availability of effective labour force, creates conditions for the rise of slavery, Keith Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves* (Cambridge, 1978), p. 100

[31] See, for example, *Select Inscriptions*, i, 35 (reference to proper treatment of slaves and servants in the Thirteenth Rock Edict—Shahbazgarhi version—of Aśoka).

[32] The *Mahābhārata* (12.15 42) says that slaves and servants would not obey the commands of their masters in the absence of the protection afforded by the coercive power of the state (*na preṣyā vacanaṃ kuryuḥ... yadi daṇḍo na pālayet*).

[33] See, for example, *Manusmṛti* VIII. 416—"a slave cannot own property". However, they were less than those envisaged in the early Buddhist texts which throw light on the conditions in the time of the Buddha, cf. Chanana, op. cit., pp. 106-7. See also R.S. Sharma, *Śūdras in Ancient India*, pp. 139, 174, 214.

[34] U.N. Ghoshal, *Studies in Indian History and Culture* (Bombay, 1957), p. 473.

[35] B.N.S. Yadava, "Some Aspects of the Changing Order in India During the Śaka-Kuṣāṇa Age", op. cit., p. 83ff; *SCNI*, p. 140.

[36] Cf. *IF*, p. 60 ff; N.C. Sen Gupta, *Evolution of Ancient Indian Law* (Calcutta, 1953), p. 210: Antonova, Ashrafyan and Alayev, *Istoria Indu F. Credniye Veka* (*Medieval History of India*, Moscow, 1967), p. 42; *SCNI*, p. 140.

[37] *Vāyu P.*, 58.42 (*bhṛtyāśca naṣṭasuhṛdo...*).

[38] *Amarakośa*, 2.10.17.

[39] The statement that in the Kali age the śūdras will not serve the *dvijas* (*Mahābhārata*, 3.188.64) and that they will cause affiction to the latter (ibid. 3.188 58) suggests a situation of internal social conflict in which slaves also may have been involved. A verse of the *Śāntiparva* of the *Mahābhārata* (12 254 39) clearly suggests conflict and hostility (*virodha*) between the masters and slaves: the former had to resort to harsh or even extreme measures—*tāḍana* (beating), *bandha* (imprisonment) and *vadha* (killing). A verse of Kātāyana (v. 350) refers to *vargins* who may have been the leaders of organized gangs of slaves (*IF*, p. 60).

[40] *Mahābhārata*, 12.254.39.

[41] *Nārada* (*The Institutes of Nārada*, ed, J. Jolly, Calcutta, 1885), 5.30 ff. In Roman history, however, manumissions are said to have reniforced slavery. But all the same they transformed slavery from hereditary bondage into temporary servitude (Keith Hopkins, op. cit., p 148), and sometimes led to a reduction in the number of slaves (ibid. p. 160).

[42] *Mahābhārata*, 12.67.15.

[43] *Yājñavalkya* II. 182.

[44] *Nārada* 5.38.

[45] *Mahābhārata*, 3.256.21.

[46] *Nārada*, 5.37

[47] *Bṛhaspati*, (Baroda, 1941), 15.23.

[48] *tataḥ prabhṛtī vaktavyaḥ svāmyanugrahapāilitaḥ, bhojyānnaḥ pratigṛhyaśca bhavatyabhimataśca saḥ*, *Nāraḍīya-Manusamhitā*, ed, K.S. Sastri (Trivandrum, 1929), 5.24. This verse does not occur in Jolly's edition. However, with a slight variation in the second line, it occurs in the reconstructed *Bṛhaspatismṛti* (p. 144, v. 19). From the Principate, as we find in Roman history also, legal opinion insisted *inter alia* that

the ex-slave be fed while working for the master (Keith Hopkins, op. cit., p. 130). In the beginning of the Middle Ages in Europe manumissions with obedience, consisting of a general duty of subjection with a promise of support in return, were widely prevalent, Marc Bloch, *Slavery and Serfdom in the Middle Ages*, tr., W.R. Beer (London, 1975), p. 17.

[49] *Manu*, IX. 150.

[50] Bühler (*The Laws of Manu*, IX. 150) has explained the world *kīnāśa* as "the slave who tills the field". Considering the social milieu reflected in the *Manusmṛti*, this view appears to have some force.

[51] *Nārada*, 4.178, 181.

[52] *Bṛhaspati*, 1.44; 13.32.

[53] Ibid. 16.1.

[54] *Vāyu P.*, 8.157.

[55] *Viṣṇudharmottara P.*, 3.10.3.

[56] In his commentary on the *Manusmṛti*, Bhāruci also explained the term *kīnāśa* as *karṣakaḥ* (ploughman, cultivator), *Bhāruci's Commentary on the Manusmṛti*, ed, J.D.M. Derrett, i, on *Manu*, IX. 150 Medhātithi, too, explained it as ploughman. Thus in both the commentaries *kīnāśas* appear as agricultural workers: the relation between a master and his *kīnāśas* has been likened (on the authority of a Vedic *mantra*) to that between Indra and Maruts (who give good gifts).

[57] Thus Asahāya (between A.D. 600 and 750) explained the term *kīnāśa* as śūdra in his commentary on the *Nāradasmṛti* (4.181). Viewed in the light of the Purāṇic evidence noticed above, this tends to show that, on the one hand, the śūdras constituted in the time of Asahāya the majority of dependent lower peasantry, and, on the other, that a section of the vaiśya peasants descended to this status which was deemed as an attribute of the śūdras. In course of time the *kīnāśa* began to be regarded as a social type (B.N.S. Yadava, "Problem of the Interaction between Socio-Economic Classes in the Early Medieval Complex", op. cit., p. 51f.). The cumulative evidence of the *Vyavahārakāṇḍa* (Gaekwad Oriental Series, Baroda, 1953, p. 402) of Lakṣmīdhara (twelfth century), the commentary of Haradatta (twelfth century) on the *Dharmasūtra* of Apastamba and the *Vivādaratnākara* (Calcutta, 1887, p. 158) of Caṇḍeśvara (fourteenth century) reveals that as petty peasants and ploughmen the *kīnāśas* were very poor, they were subservient to their masters and were sometimes compelled to stick to the land they tilled: *yasya kīnāśasya vaśī svatantraḥ kṣetravānnāsti, sa yadi pūrvakṛṣṭasya kṣetrasya kṛṣikarma nyaset na kuryāt, tasya daṇḍatāḍanaṁ*...Haradatta on *Āpastamba Dharmansūtram* (Varanasi, 1969), 2.11.2.

[58] J.D.M. Derrett, ed, *Bhārūci's Commentary on the Manusmṛti*, i, Introduction, 10

[59] Ghoshal, op. cit., p. 475f.

[60] Cf. Sandhya Mukerje, *Some Aspects of Social Life in Ancient India (325 B.C.-A.D. 200)* (Allahabad, 1976), p. 202.

[61] *Mahābhārata*, 2.63.1.

[62] *Manu*, VIII. 416; *Nārada* 5 39, 41; *Bṛhaspati*, 15.24; *Kātyāyanasmṛtisāroddhāra*, ed, Kane, p. 88. vv. 724, 725, etc.

[63] The Smṛtis of Manu, Yājñavalkya, Nārada, Bṛhaspati and Kātyāyana have been assigned to this period in chronological order, Kane, *History of Dharmaśātra*, i, pt 1 (Poona, 1968).

[64] *Bhāruci's Commentary on the Manusmṛti* (ed and tr. Derrett), i, ii, on *Manusmṛti*, VIII. 414, 416.

[65] Ibid. on *Manu* VIII. 66.

[66] However, the view of Bhāruci was not wholly accepted by the later commentators and digest-writers.

[67] Medhātithi on *Manu*, VIII. 416.

[68] *Manu*, VIII. 414.

[69] For such parallel in the Roman practice, see Keith Hopkins, op. cit., p. 153. In some manumission contracts, ex-slaves were explicitly required to go on working after manumission like slaves. In the classical world the dichotomy between slave and free was not always sharp, and sometimes the two categories had significantly overlapped (Keith Hopkins, loc. cit.).

[70] Medhātithi on *Manu*, VIII. 414.

[71] *dāsāścātra vaitanikā gṛhyante*, Medhātithi on *Manu*, V. 60. For the difference between *dāsas* and *vaitanikas*, see his commentary on *Manu* VIII. 70.

[72] Ibid. The status of *bhaktadāsa* was the highest in the hierarchy of slavery.

[73] Medhātithi on *Manu*, VIII. 215.

[74] Medhātithi on *Manu*, VIII. 415.

[75] *Bṛhaspati*, 16.1.

[76] One who enticed a *bhaktadāsa* or dependent *śilpin* (artisan) of a person by giving him the allurement of paying more (wages) was deemed to be liable to punishment (Meahātithi or *Manu*, VIII. 342). On account of the growing agrarian character of economy, the transformed *bhaktadāsas* may have mostly been made dependent peasants or farm-hands. Medhātithi has referred to such *bhaktadāsas* as were engaged for one year (*sāṃvatsaras* in *Manu*, VIII. 215), and according to the *Mahābhārata* (12.60.25) *sāmvatsarī* wages were one-seventh of the agricultural produce.

[77] Bhaṭṭotpala on *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* 9. 21; 86.15 (*dāsa* explained as *bhṛtya*); on *Bṛhajjātaka*, 8. 18 (*bhṛtya* explained as *karmakara*). In the ancient period, as the *Nāradasmṛti* shows *dāsas* were clearly differentiated from *karmakaras*.

[78] On *Bṛhatsaṃhjtā*, 77. 9.

[79] In common parlance real slaves were held in very low esteem—*yā sanjñā vihitā loke dāse śuni vṛke paśau*; *Mahābhārata*, 12.62.5. According to Baṇa, the word *dāsa* in its real sense conjured up an image of the most wretched state, of deep degradation and intense bondage, *prabalapankamiva sarvamadhastānnayati dāruṇo dāsaśabdaḥ*, *Harṣacarita* (Bombay, 1925), p. 224.

[80]In the context of *bhojyānna* śūdras, the trem *dāsa*, occurring in the sense of slave in *Manu* (IV. 253) and *Yājñavalkya* (I. 166), has been explained as a mixed caste in the *Parāśarasmṛti* (XI. 23)' This *dāsa* was different from *dāśa* (boatman) included in the list of *antyajas* in one of the *smṛtis* of the early medieval period, Vivekanand Jha, "Stages in the History of Untouchables", *IHR*, ii, no. 1 (1975), 30. As regards the date of the *Parāśara* the earlier view of Kane that it must be assigned to some period between the first and the fifth centuries A.D. (*History of Dharmaśāstra*, i, 464) has rightly been revised, placing it now between A.D 600 and 900 (*History of Dharmaśāstra*, iv x; ibid. v, pt ii, xiii). The revised date gets support from the internal evidence of the text, in which we find the eulogization of *satī*, the conception of share croppers as a mixed caste (XI. 22), and above all the overriding concern for the Kali age and *yugadharma*.

[81]See for example, Medhātithi on *Manu*, VIII. 363; IX. 143.

[82]Such a situation has been noticed in medieval Europe also, Marc Bloch, op. cit., p. 21.

[83]In the works of Varāhamihira the distinction between *preṣya* and *dāsa* has been consistently observed. The *Sārāvalī*, ed, S. Jha (Banaras, 1953) of Kalyāṇavarmā (ninth century A D.), an earlier work which has been cited by Bhaṭṭotpala (on *Bṛhajjātaka*, 8. 19), clearly shows that the status of the *preṣyas* was higher than that of slaves (*dāsas*) and servants (*bhṛtakas*): person with three, four and five planets in debilitation in their natal charts became *preṣyas*, *bhṛtakas* and *dāsas* respectively (*Sārāvalī*, 45. 38-40). But the word *preṣya* has variously been explained by Bhaṭṭotpala as *dāsa* (slave)—Bhaṭṭotapala on *Bṛhajjātaka*, 20.4; *karmakara* (wage-labourer)—on *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*, 50.25; *dāsakarmakara*—on *Bṛhajjātaka*, 13.6. The terms *parapreṣyakaraḥ*, *viṣṭikaraḥ*, *ājnākaraḥ* and *parakarmakṛt* have also been used in the same context for people engaged in forced labour (on *Bṛhajjātaka*, 18. 11). The commentary of Buddhaghoṣa on the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* shows that *dāsakammakara* (*porisa*) was neither a slave nor servant, but a dependent labourer attached to his master or protector (Chanana op. cit., pp. 73, 171). According to Rhys Davids and Stede, he was a slave-servant or unpaid labourer or serf (*Pali-English Dictionary*, p. 320). He appears to have been somewhat close to serfdom, but he cannot be regarded as serf in the real sense of the term.

[84]*bhṛtidāsaḥ vaitanikaḥ*, Medhātithi on *Manu*, VIII. 66.

[85]This, as Medhātithi (on *Manu* VIII. 66) pointed out, was not the absolute dependence (*nātyantapāratryam*) of slavery.

[86]Commentary on *Bṛhajjātaka*, 13.6.

[87]*Nārada*, 5.27. Cf. R.S. Sharma, "Usury in Early Medieval India (A.D. 400-1200)", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, viii, no. 1, 68.

[88]*Kātyāyanasmṛtisāroddhāra*, ed, P.V. Kane, v. 480.

[89] *Manu*, VIII. 175-6, 176-7.

[90] *nirdhano' dharmarṇo nirdhanatvāt na mucyate kintarhi karma kārayitavyaḥ*, Medhātithi on *Manu*, VIII. 117. This was to be done in respect of debtors belonging to the same caste as that of the creditor or to a caste lower than that of the latter. It was, however, not applicable to the brāhmaṇa debtors. In this context Medhātithi has used the term *dāsya* for the relation between the creditor and the debtor doing manual labour. But elsewhere (on *Manu*, VIII. 415) he has argued that this relationship was different from slavery (*anyaddāsyamanyacca tatkarmakāritvam*). *Kāyikā* interest, which was to be met through bodily labour, was mentioned for the first time in this sense by Bhāruci (on *Manu*, 152 153). Medhātithi (on *Manu*, VIII. 153) has also explained it in the same sense.

[91] For the difference between slavery and debt bondage, see R.W. Winks, ed, *Slavery: A Comparative Perspective* (New York, 1972), pp. 51, 57.

[92] On *Manu*, VIII. 46.

[93] *ātmano vṛttiparipiālayiṣayā' dhamarṇāniva devāḥ paratantrānmanuṣyānpratyamṛtatvaprāptim prati vighnam kuryuriti. . . . tasmādeṣām tanna priyam yadetānmanuṣyā vidyuriti*, Śaṅkara *on Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 1 4.10.

[94] This phenomenon may be regarded as somewhat close to serfdom, cf. R S. Sharma. "Usury in Early Medieval India (A.D. 400-1200)", op. cit., p. 68.

[95] Ibid. pp. 60,65. A modern survey of a number of villages in West Bengal reveals how the mechanism of exploitation of peasants actually worked, on a large scale, on the basis of consumption loans which led the debtor peasants (mostly share-croppers) to the state of being tied to the plots of land they tilled and to their creditor landlords. The relationship between these petty peasants and their landlords, representing a vestige of the medieval times, has been viewed as semi-feudal in nature. A. Bhaduri, "Agricultural Background under Semi-feudalism", *The Economic Journal* (The Quarterly Journal of the Royal Economic Society, lxxxiii, no. 329, 120 ff.

[96] R S. Sharma, "Using in Early Medieval period op. cit., pp. 65, 66.

[97] Ibid. p. 66.

[98] *Nārada*, ed, Jolly, 5.27. This practice did not die out in the early medieval period. Some forms of documents contained in the *Lekhapaddhati* (Baroda, 1925, pp. 45, 46) reveal that women who were rendered destitute on account of famine sold themselves into slavery.

[99] *The Mahāvastu*, tr., J.J. Jones (London, 1949), p. 18; R. Basak, "Indian Life As Revealed in the Buddhist Work, *Mahāvastu-Avadāna*", *J.N. Banerjea Volume* (Calcutta, 1960), p. 22. According to Winternitz, the nucleus of this text was formed in the second century B.C., but it was enlarged in the fourth century A.D., perhaps still later, by additions and interpolations, *History of Indian Literature*, ii, 247.

[100] The original text may also imply the ruthless subjection of destitute persons to forced labour, *Mahāvastu Avadāna*, ed R. Basak, i (Calcutta 1963), 26.

[101] Medhātithi on *Manu*, ed, and tr., G.N. Jha, IV. 253f.

[102] Medhātithi on *Manu*, II. 24; *SCNI*, p. 166. According to the later commentators of Manu—Govindarāja, Rāghavānanda and Nandana, the people who entered into such ties of dependence performed agricultural or domestic work, or practised arts and crafts. Such a worker, according to Nandana was subservient to his master (*svavasaḥ karmukaraḥ*) *Mānavadharmaśāstram*, Bombay, 1888, on IV. 253f)

[103] *Laghu-Viṣṇusmṛti*, I. 15.

[104] *SCNI*, p. 148: *Parāśara-Mādhavīya*, XI. 22.

[105] On *Manu*, VIII. 4.15.

[106] *Lekhapaddhati*, pp. 44, 45; L. Gopal, *Economic Life in Northern India* (Varanasi, 1965), p. 71; *SCNI*, p. 74.

[107] In the eighth century an Arab governor of Sindh invaded Kashmir and secured many prisoners and slaves, cf. D.C. Ganguly, "Central and Westrern India", *The Age of Imperial Kanouj*, ed, R.C. Majumdar (Bombay, 1955), p. 114.

[108] Elliot and Dowson, *History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, ii 39, 230, 231, 348, etc.

[109] L. Gopal, op. cit., p. 73 f. A form cf document in the *Lekhapaddhati* (p. 47) refers to the export of female slaves to foreign countries.

[110] See, for example, *Kathāsaritsāgara*, 7. 3. 3-51; *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, 4.397.

[111] Text edited and translated be H.C. Bhayani, *Bhāratīya Vidyā*, xvii, nos 3-4 (1957), 130 ff. See also *Raula Vela*, ed and tr., Mata Prasad Gupta (University of Allahabad, 1962). I am thankful to my colleague. Dr. Sandhya Mukerjee, for drawing my attention to the importance of this inscription.

[112] H C. Bhayani, op. cit., p. 133.

[113] Mata Prasad Gupta, op. cit., p. 96, however, thinks that this term refers to the region of Utkal.

[114] Ll. 27,34.

[115] Cf. Sukumar Sen, *Anand Bazar Patrika*, Annual Number, Bengali Year 1374, p. 7ff.

[116] L. 35.

[117] The term had acquired a special significance in the *sāmanta* system of India. It was used in connection with the relationship between the master and the servant or attendant, on the one hand, and between the *sāmanta* and the overlord, on the other. The *Deśīnāmamālā* (I. 164) of Hemacandra (twelfth century) reveals that the term *oluggo*, meaning servant or attendant, was popular in Gujarat, Rajasthan and the adjoining regions (*SCNI*, p. 40). In the *Uktivyakti-prakaraṇa* (Bombay, 1953) of Dāmodara (twelfth century), also, which mainly throws light on the conditions obtaining in eastern

Uttar Pradesh, we find the terms *olagi* and *avalagihauṃ* (ibid. pp. 11,20) The words *avalagana* and *olaga*, in the sense of personal as well as military service, were prevalent in Rajasthan and the adjoining regions (*SCNI*, p. 137). Thus, in the light of all this, it may be surmised that the personal relationship of dependence, involved in the *sāmanta* system, began to transform to some extent the relationship of slavery (see also P.N. Tiwari, *Sammelan Patrikā*, li, pts 3-4, 16). As against this, there is also some evidence of the relationship of slavery (especially that between a purchased slave and his master) providing a model for the relationship between a *sāmanta* and his overlord (Udayagiri Cave Inscription A.D. 401, of Candragupta II (*Select Inscriptions*, i, 280, 1.2), and, to some extent, between the subjects and ruler (*Nāradīya-Manusamhitā*, 18.23). However, this was not the only model.

[118] *Lekhapaddhati*, pp. 44-5.

[119] *jahim ghare aisī ulagam paisai, tam gharu rāula jaisaum disai* (1.14). Fer *olaga* in the same sense,see 1.37.

[120] This does not mean the total abolition of slavery in the sphere of agricultural production. In some regions its vestiges continued to survive for a long time. This is borne out by the evidence of the *Lekhapaddhati* (Baroda, 1925, p. 47) and the *Likhanāvalī* (ed, Indrakanta Jha, Patna, 1969, pp. 42 8) of Vidyāpati. The forms of documents relating to slaves in the former throw light on the conditions of Rajasthan, Gujarat and the adjoining regions at the close of the early medieval period. The latter reveals the conditions of the region of Mithila in the fourteenth century. Domestic slavery also continued to exist to some extent (*SCNI*, p. 73f). Under the Delhi Sultanate the use of slave-labour appears to have increased, which, however, was "a transitional phenomenon", Irfan Habib, "Economic History of the Delhi Sultanate", *IHR*, iv, no. 2, 294.

[121] Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, v, pt ii, 768, 910.

[122] While enumerating the types of *karmakaras*, this Purāṇa refers to those who were *deśāvadhika* (required to work in particular places) and *putrapautrānugaḥ* (hereditary), ibid. 3.334.1, 16. Hereditary dependence continuing up to a hundred years has also been postulated in the case of royal servants, *tathaiva... bhṛtyānāṃ bhṛtiṃ varṣaśatadapi*, ibid. 3.334. 16.

[123] *SCNI*, p. 165f.

[124] Vogel, *Antiquities of Chamba State*, pt i, 167, 1.24f. The *āśritahālika* appears to be akin to the *kīnāśā*, mentioned in some law-digests and a commentary, who was subservient to his master and was obliged to stick to the work of tilling the fields.

[125] Hereditary dependence has been regarded as one of the fundamental characteristics of serfdom, Marc Bloch, *Slavery and Serfdom in the Middle Ages*, pp. 142, 143.

[126] It was laid down in the Śāntiparva of the *Mahābhārata* (12.60.25) that the performance of agricultural labour in return for one-seventh of the produce was a normal occupation of the vaiśyas.

[127] "Some Aspects of the Changing Order in India During the Śaka-Kuṣaṇa Age" op. cit., p. 75ff.

[128] *Mahābhārata*, 3.188 58, 64. There is ample evidence to show that this was also expressed in the form of religious protest (ibid. 3.188.63). A paper touching upon the social crisis as reflected in some early accounts of the Kali age was read by Professor R.S. Sharma in the thirty-ninth session (1978) of the India History Congress at Hyderabad.

[129] See, for example, the *Daśāvatāracarita* (1.30) of Kṣemendra.

[130] *Mahābhārata*, 3.186.92.

[131] Ibid. 3.186.51. Kane has, however, taken the verse only in its literal sense (*History of Dharmaśāstra*, iii, 892-3).

[132] *maṇḍalāni bhaviṣyanti deśeṣu nagareṣu ca*, *Vāyu P.*, 40, 55; *Linga P.*, 30.30. The preceding line of the verse, refers in an exaggrated manner, to the decline in population. The next verse mentions the oppression by the rulers and also their maladministration.

[133] *maṇḍalaiḥ prabhaviṣyanti deśe deśe pṛthakpṛthak*, *Harivaṃśa*, 117.26 This line occurs in the section dealing with theKali age. See also *Brahma P.*, 231.67.

[134] *maṇḍalaṁ grāmasandohe*, *N narthasangraha* of Ajayapāla (University of Madras, 1973), p. 70, v. 3. This meaning of the term is not found in the *Amarakośa*.

[135] *triliṅgam maṇḍalam vṛnde grāmaughapkatibimbayoḥ*, *Vaijayantī*, ed, G. Oppert, p. 262, 1.130.

[136] *Narapatijacaryāsvarodaya*, pt i (Kashi, v s. 1962), 108.

[137] *Mānasāra*, ed, P.K. Acharya, p. 284, v. 29ff; p. 285, v. 38; *SCNI*, p. 297f. For a detailed discussion of this evidence and also of the term *khaṇḍamaṇḍalabhūpāla* in the context of the *Viṣṇu P.* the *Bhgavata P.* and their commentaries, see S N. Roy, *Purāṇa*, xiv, no. 2, 101f. In the *Varṇaratnākara* also, which throws light on the conditions of Mithila in later times, *māṇḍalika* appears as a lesser chief (ibid., ed, S K. Chatterji and B. Misra, p. 36f)

[138] *SCNI*, pp. 149, 162f.

[139] *Sārāvalī* of Kalyāṇavarmā, 36.16ff.

[140] G C. Pande, "Population in Ancient India", *JBRS*, xiv, pts i-iv, 390.

[141] *SCNI*, p. 149.

[142] In a section of *Viṣṇu P.* (4.10.16-8), other than that dealing with the Kali age, the term *maṇḍalin* means a subordinate of feudatory ruler of high status (Om Prakash, *Polity in the Purāṇas*, unpublished portion of his thesis approved for the D. Phil. degree by the University of Allahabad, p. 324). But in the Purāṇas noticed above the word *maṇḍala* appears to have been used mainly for the petty principalities and estates of chiefs and landlords in the context of the account of degeneration in the Kali age. This has nothing to do with the *maṇḍala* theory of interstate relations or the *maṇḍalas* as different regions of India in the *Yuga P.* (ed, D.R. Mankad, Vallabh Vidyanagar, 1951, 11, 187ff).

[143] *SCNI*, p. 170f.

[144] *Vividhatīrthakalpa* of Jinaprabha Sūri, Singhi Jain Series, no. 10 (Santiniketan, 1934), p. 39.

[145] G.C. Pande, op. cit., p. 387.

[146] Ibid.

[147] Ibid.

[148] The account of Hiuen Tsang reveals that many cities of northern India, especially the Buddhist ones, lay in ruins, ibid. J.B. Saint-Hilaire, *Hiouen Thsang in India*, tr. from the French by Laura Ensor (Varanasi, 1965), p. 79.

[149] Cf. A Ghosh, *The City in Early Historical India* (Simla, 1973), p. 46; U N. Roy, *Prācīna Bhārata men Nagara tathā Nagarajīvana* (Allahabad, 1965).

[150] R S. Sharma, "Feudalism Retouched," *IHR*, i, no. 2 (1974), 326,fn. 4.

[151] The record of *mahāsāmanta* Viṣṇuṣeṇa, as endorsed by *sāmanta* Avanti, may be connected with the Gujarat-Kathiawar region, D.C. Sircar, *EI*, xxx, 179. The *sāmanta* system appears to have exercised a retrograde influence on artisan industry and commerce here. The practice of forced labour, which was thought to be mainly prevalent in the rural set-up (*Ādi Purāṇa* of Jinasena, 16-168), and not in cities (Śankha-Likhita cited in the *Vyavahārakāṇḍa* of Lakṣmīdhara, p. 804), has been sanctioned in this inscription. It reveals (*EI*, xxx, 181) that blacksmiths, carpenters, barbers, potters, and others could be recruited for *viṣṭi* (forced labour). For another restriction imposed on the *śreṇis* (guilds), see below.

[152] *manussā balipīlitā gāmanigamādayo chaḍḍetvā* . . ., *The Jātaka*, ed, V. Fausboll, i (London, 1962), 339.

[153] K.K. Thaplyal, *Studies in Ancient Seals* (Lucknow, 1972), p. 233. For a different interpretation of *nigama* see D.C. Sircar, *EI*, xxxviii no. 31, 184f.

[154] R.S. Sharma, "Decay of Gangetic Towns in Gupta and Post-Gupta Times", *JIH*, *Golden Jubilee Volume* (1973), p. 277.

[155] G.C. Pande, op. cit., p. 388: Josiah C. Russel, op. cit., p. 277.

[156] R.S. Sharma, "Decay of Gangetic Towns in Gupta and post-Gupta Times," op. cit., p. 135ff.

[157] This is of course a wider problem, not confined to the Indian context; cf. D.P. Dymond, *Archaeology and History: A Plea for Reconciliation* (London, 1974), pp. 81, 85, 101, 102, 107.

[158] A verse in the *Yuga Purāṇa* may suggest that there were some upheavals and disturbances after the downfall of the Śaka-kuṣāṇa power (*vinaṣṭe śakarājye tu śūnyā pṛthvī bhaviṣyati*, ibid. 1.129). The tradition contained in this text may be early.

[159] R S. Sharma, loc. cit. The flourishing towns of the Sātavāhana dominions also began to decay from the fourth century A.D. The decay and disappearance of urban centres, as he thinks, created

conditions for the rise of self-sufficient regional productive units, "Problem of Transition from Ancient to Medieval in Indian History," op. cit., p. 5.

[160] *Viṣṇu P.*, 6.1.35.

[161] *Bṛhannāradīya P.*, 38.37

[162] *Viṣṇu P.*, 6.1.35, 19.

[163] This situation must have posed a danger to the *varṇa* hierarchy. But, with the maturing of the phase of transition, the *varṇa* system began to be readjusted and consolidated; it began to play a somewhat new role in the changed social set-up (*SCNI*, chapter 1, p. 173ff).

[164] *SCNI*, chapter 3. This may be connected with the process of the emergence of the *rājaputras* as a distinct, sizable section of the ruling landed aristocracy (*SCNI*, pp. 32ff., 139). See also B.D. Chattopadhyaya, "Origin of the Rajputs . . .", *IHR*, iii, no. 1. For the term *rājaputra* indicating a special prestige value, and for *rājaputras* as the nobility, see J.N. Asopa, *Origin of the Rajputs* (Delhi, 1976), p. 6ff.

[165] However, we find a vague hint in the Jain text, *Vividhatīrthakalpa*, p. 39, 1.8.

[166] *SCNI*, p. 163ff.

[167] *Bṛhannāradīya P.*, 22.11.

[168] Ibid. 22.12-6.

[169] For the *sāmanta* system as an outstanding feature of the Middle Ages in India, see *SCNI*, chapter 3.

[170] *durbhikṣakarapīḍābhiḥ*, *Viṣṇu P.*, 6.1.36; *Bṛhannāradīya P.*, 38.86f. The previous verse of the *Bṛhannāradīya P.* mentions cities also in this context. In the *Mahābhārata*, however, we find the expression *viṣṭikarārditāḥ* (Gita Press edn, 3. 1970-73) in similar, though not identical, context. This suggests that *pīḍā* (oppression) may have included *viṣṭi* (forced labour).

[171] *Viṣṇu P.*, 6.1.34, 36.

[172] The inscription (*EI*, xxx, 179) of Viṣṇuṣeṇa (between A.D. 589 and 605) throws some light on how the urban ownership of land began to be affected. It states that a common market (*ekāpaṇaka*) would not be allowed to different guilds (*sarvaśreṇīnāṃ*). This reveals not only the policy of segregation but also the fact that the privilege of common market was disallowed. In the Roman empire also the common public market (*macellum*) played an important role in commercal activities (J. Toutain, *The Economic Life of the Ancient World*, London, 1930, p. 313).

[173] Santo Mazzarino, op. cit., p. 147ff.

[174] Ibid.

[175] Zinaida Udaltsova and Kira Osipova, *Social Sciences*, vi, no. 2 (20) (Moscow, 1975), 122.

[176] For example, S. Gopal, H. Jha, K.M. Tiwari and G.P. Sinha, "A Note on R.S. Sharma's Ideas on Indian Feudalism", *IHR*, i, no. 2 (1974), 442-3.

[177] *SCNI*, p. 270ff.

[178] In the *Ādi Purāṇa* of Jinasena (ninth century) the fortified town (*pura*) has been defined as the dwelling-place of the élite (*pradhāna-puruṣocitam*, ibid. 16.170), and not as a centre of trade and commerce.

[179] *SCNI*, p. 243f.

[180] *alpadravyā*, *Mahābhārata*, 3. 188.50.

[181] *alpārthāśca*, *Bṛhannāradīya P.*, 38.34; also *alpadravyā*, ibid. 38.62.

[182] *sañcayenāpi cālpena bhavantyāḍhyā*, *Mahābhārata*, 3. 186.49.

[183] *dhanāḍhyā'pi yācakāḥ*, *Bṛhannāradīya P.*, 38.77.

[184] *savvam rāya-ule gacchihi tti*, *Vividhatīrthakalpa*, p. 37, v. 13f.

[185] *paṇārdhārdhārdhamātre'pi kariṣyanti tadā spṛham*, *Viṣṇu P.*, 6.1.22. The Viṣṇucityā commentary (on ibid.) explains the term *paṇa* not as a coin, but as eighty cowries or a small quantity of gold weighing five *guñjas*. This suggests that *paṇa* gradually ceased to remain as a popularly known coin. *Paṇārdhārdhārdha* also does not appear to have been in circulation as a common coin representing a sub-multiple of *paṇa*.

[186] *Bhāgavata P.*, 12.3 41.

[187] *The Jātaka*, i, ed, V. Fausboll, 339; ibid. ed, E B. Cowell, tr., R. Chalmers, p. 190.

[188] *Samantapāsādikā* by Buddhaghoṣa, ii (Nava Nalanda Mahavihara publications, Patna, 1965), 698.

[189] *Manu*, VIII, 136; *Viṣṇudharmottara P.* (Venkatesvara Press, Bombay), II. 72 4; Vijñāneśvara on *Vājñavalkya*, I. 365.

[190] Ibid.

[191] For example, *suvarṇamaṇiratnādau vastre copakṣayam gate*, *Viṣṇu P.*, 6.1.17. However, this state of affairs should not be overemphasized (*SCNI*, p. 282); M S. Shukla, *History of Gem Industry in Ancient and Medieval India* (Varanasi, 1972), p. 4ff. At any rate, the paucity of precious metals cannot fully account for the shortage of money, for there does not appear to have been any great difficulty in issuing coins of base metals in sufficiently large numbers. The circulation of cowries in many regions as medium of currency was not able to open any great radius of action for the traders (cf. Macdonald, *The Evolution of Coinage*, Cambridge, 1916, p. 3). Cowries were too common and plentiful to offer a wide range of activities and products drawn into commercial exchange. In the main their prevalence as currency could only have geared the relations of the more or less closed agrarian economy to the comparatively simple needs of exchange.

[192] *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, IV. 347f.

[193] Ibid. VIII. 494ff; VIII. 1207f.

[194] In the period of the crisis of the Roman empire also we notice extreme deflationary efforts in order to check the emergence of great landed lordships, under the patronage of which small peasant-proprietors, who could not pay the heavy taxes in cash, began to take refuge.

Whatever their original purpose might have been, these measures ultimately brought society nearer to natural economy under the conditions of insufficient productivity (Santo Mazzarino, op. cit., p. 154).

[195] A modern study of Malhad in the north-western part of Shimoga district in south India has revealed the vestiges of bondsmanship from 1878 until nearly the present. In order to buttress local rural economy controlled by landlords, the bondsmen were for all practical purposes prohibited from dealing in money economy open to others, and were not paid in cash, James Silverberg, ed, *Social Mobility in the Caste System in India* (The Hague, 1968), pp. 37, 46. But this extreme situation could have existed in the localities in which tribal labour was employed. For the antithesis between money economy, including commodity-money relations, and the feudal seigniory characterized by natural economy in the Middle Ages in Europe, see Zinaida Udaltsova and Kira Osipova, op. cit., p. 105. However, sometimes the commodity-money relations tended to preserve the deep-rooted institutions of corvée and serfdom in some regions of Europe (ibid.).

[196] For almost similar conditions in Byzantium, see Zinaida Udaltsova *et al*, op. cit., p. 118.

[197] In the Critical Edition of the text (3.188.71) the reading *vṛṣṭi* has been preferred. But, on the basis of a comparative study of the readings in the different manuscripts, R.K. Dwivedi (loc. cit.) rightly thinks that it should be *viṣṭi*. In the *Viṣṇu P.* (6.1.36) and *Bṛhannāradīya P.*, (38.87) also the expression *karapīḍā*. occurs in the same context.

[198] Many other sources also reveal that the taxation system in the Middle Ages tended to become oppressive, *SCNI*, p. 297ff.

[199] *bhikṣavaśca kuṭumbinaḥ*, *Bhāgavata P.*, 12.3.33.

[200] *āḍhyā kuṭumbino* . . ., ibid. 12.3.28.

[201] *Skanda P.*, Nāgarakhaṇḍa, 6.27.96.

[202] According to Winternitz, the prose narratives of the Jātakas can serve as document, "for the greater part,...only for the fifth or sixth century A.D." (*History of Indian Literature*, 2nd edn Reprint, ii, New Delhi, 1977, 156). In fact, "the position of the Jātaka book is probably no different from that of the *Mahābhārata*. Not only every large section and every single narrative, but often also every single *gāthā*, will have to be tested independently as regards its age" (ibid. p. 122).

[203] *lokassa viparivattakāle...*, *The Jātaka*, i, ed, V. Fausboll, 344. For the reading *viparivattana-kāle*, see *Jātakaṭṭhakathā* (Bharatiya Jnanapitha, Kashi, 1951), p. 248.

[204] *mahyaṃ sāsane parihāyante...*, *The Jātaka*, i, 340. In a late section of the *Lankāvatārasūtra* and in the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* (pt ii, Trivandrum, 1922, 285, 286) the phase of decadence which witnessed the decline of Buddhism has been regarded as Kali age. The *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* was translated into Chinese between A.D. 980 and 1000 (Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature*, ii, 397). The process of

the decline of Buddhism comes into view round about the seventh century A.D., cf. G.C. Pande, *Bauddha Dharma ke Vikasa ke Itihāsa*, 2nd edn (Lucknow, 1976), p. 485 ff; Mitra, *Decline of Buddhism* (Visva-Bharati, 1954), p 5.

[205] In the original Pali text we find *upaddutamanussā sake kammante chaḍḍetvā* (*The Jātaka*, i, ed, Fausboll, 339). Here the term *upadduta* means oppressed.

[206] *The Jātaka*, i, ed, E.B. Cowell, tr., Chalmers (Delhi, 1973), 190.

[207] Ibid.

[208] Cf. G.K. Rai, "Forced Labour in Ancient and Early Medieval India", *IHR*, iii, no. 1 (1976), 26.

[209] Ibid. p. 28. For the view that there was an increase in the oppressive character of forced labour in the Gupta period, see D.N. Jha, *Mauryottara tathā Guptakālīna Rājasva-vyavasthā* (Hindi tr.) (New Delhi, 1977). p. 193.

[210] *Samantapāsādikā*, ii (Patna, 1965), 517, 11. 2,6.

[211] According to Keith, he wrote about A D. 550 (*A History of Sanskrit Literature*, Oxford University Press, 1920, p. 517). A.M. Shastri, however, thinks that the flourishing period of his life cannot be placed before the last quarter of the fifth century A D. (*India as Seen in the Bṛhatsamhitā of Varāhamihira*, Varanasi, 1959, p. 17).

[212] *Bṛhajjātaka* of Varāhamihira, 18.11. In the earlier age the employment of hired labourers (*karmkaras*) and the use of slaves (*dāsas*) and servants were more common.

[213] Ibid. 18.18; 21.7. The term occurring in these two verses has been explained by Bhaṭṭotpala as *bhāravāhakaḥ* and *bhārajīvī* respectively. The *bhāravāhakas* were not always the ordinary carriers of loads: the extended meaning of the word included the tillers of the soil also (*lāngalākarṣam hi bhāravāhtavam, tacca khalajanapadakarma*, Medhātithi on *Manu*. IV. 51.

[214] *Bṛhajjātaka*. 21.7.

[215] Ibid. 23.14.

[216] *Nārada*, 5.26ff.

[217] *Sārāvalī*, ed, M. Chaturvedi (Varanasi, 1977), Introduction, p. 5.

[218] Ibid. 21.34.

[219] Ibid. 44.38-40.

[220] Commentary on *Bṛhajjātaka*, 18.11,

[221] On *Manu*, IV. 5.

[222] Bhaṭṭotpala on *Bṛhajjātaka*, 18.18; 21.7.

[223] *Bṛhajjātaka*, 18.11.

[224] An inscriptional evidence belonging to the period between A D. 589 and 605 *EI*, xxx, 181) has already been noticed.

[225] In the *Śāśvantakośa* (*c*. sixth century A D), as cited by Kṣīrasvāmin in his commentary on the *Amarakośa* (Poona, 1941, 1.8.2), the term *viṣṭi* (forced labour) has been explained as unpaid labour, wages (*ājūvetanayorviṣṭiḥ*), etc. It appears that by the period in or around

the sixth century A.D. the dimension of *viṣṭi* increased to such an extent that it included forced wage-labour also.

[226] 3.13.27. ff.; 3.14.1-15.

[227] VIII. 215.

[228] II. 193ff,

[229] *karmākurvan pr .tiśrutya kāryo datvā bhṛtim balāt*, *Nārada*, 6.5. This verse has been cited by Medhātithi (on *Manu*, VIII.215) also in connection with the labourers, including the *bhaktcdāsas*: *pratiśrutya na kuryādyaḥ sa kāryaḥ syād balādapi*, *Bṛhaspati*, 16.7. Kātyāyana, however, recommended such a measure for the workman who would not complete the work after starting it (*Kātyāyanasmṛtisāroddhāra*, v. 657). Such labourers included agricultural labourers also.

[230] Thus Bṛhaspati laid down a fine of 200 (*karṣāpaṇas* according to the *Smṛticandrikā*).

[231] *SCNI*, chapter 3.

[232] But it was not so elaborate as European feudalism, *SCNI*, loc. cit.

[233] K.A. Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1957). p. 415.

[234] This work is comparatively late, but it contains earlier traditions, ibid. Introduction, pp. 1 2.

[235] *Vividhatīrthakalpa*, p. 39.

[236] Ibid. It has rightly been pointed out that in earlier times *kuṭumbikas* as well-off vaiśya householders were connected not only with cultivation but also with trade and usury (S. Bhattacharya, *Some Aspects of Indian Society from c. 2nd century B.C. to c. 4th Centura A.D.*, p. 129f., 248). In the early centuries of the Christian era, however, there started the process of the gradual sinking of the rank of *kuṭumbikas*, who remained by and large only peasants (ibid). For the tendency of the decline of the status of peasantry in that age, see also B.N.S. Yadava, "Some Aspects of the Changing Order in India During the Śaka-Kuṣāṇa Age", op. cit., p. 82. This tendency appears to have broadened out and deepened in the early medieval pereiod.

In the *Gauḍavaho* the term *kuḍumbī* or *kuudmbla* has been used for the lower peasantry, including the tillers of the soil, *Pāiasaddamahaṇṇavo*, p. 252. In the commentary of Medhātithi (on *Manu*, IV. 253) the words *kuuṭmbī* and *bhūmikarṣaka* denote a produce-sharing peasant or share-cropper. In the *Nānārthārṇavasamkṣepa* (Trivandrum Sanskrit Series, no. xxix, pt ii, Kāṇḍa 3, p. 95, v. 559) of Keśavasvāmin (twelfth-thireenth century), who flourished in the south, the term *kuḍumbī* has been explained as *kṛṣīvala* (cultivator, or peasant). Thus, it is evident that the term acquired a special connotation in the Middle Ages.

[237] For the dependence of the rural masses, representing special feature of the early Middle Ages in Europe, see Guy Fourquin, *Landlordship and Feudalism in the Middle Ages* (London, 1976), p. 37ff.

[238] The *Narasimha P.* (58.10,11) also laid down for the śūdras that they should practise agriculture by being dependent in a slave-like manner (*dāsavat*).

[239] For the subjection of the peasants and the restrictions imposed on them in the early medieval complex, see *SCNI*, p. 163ff.

[240] *Bṛahnnāradīya P.*, 38. 43.

[241] I. M. Diakonoff, "The Rural Community in Ancient Near East", *JESHO*, xviii, pt ii (June 1975), 122-8. For the conception of freedom in the framework of the ancient society in Western Asia, see ibid. p. 124.

[242] For the evidence from other sources, see B.N.S. Yadava, "Immobility and Subjection of Indian Peasantry in Early Medieval Complex", *IHR*, i, no. 1 (1974), 18ff. This phenomenon has been noticed in the history of Europe also; see, for example, D. Folke, "Bondage, Tenure and Progress: Reflections on the Economics of Forced Labour", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vii, no. 1, October 1964, 321.

[243] For example, in some early accounts of the Kali age there are traces of the dread of the system of sale and purchase (*Mahābhārata*, 3.188.53, *Vāyu P.*, 58 51) under the circumstances characterized by the expansion of money economy in ancient times. The resultant decline and diminution of the earlier system of gifts and exchanges (Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*, London, 1974, p. 123, fn. 49) was also bewailed (*na kaścitkasyaciddātā*, *Mahābhārata*, 3.188.50).

[244] Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, iii, 890, fn. 1747.

[245] Fleet, *CII*, iii, no. 33.

[246] *Select Inscriptions*, pp. 385-9; U.N. Roy, *Gupta Rājavamśa tathā Usakā Yuga* (Allahabad, 1977), p. 744ff.

[247] Verses 8, 9, 12, 15, 16 and 18.

[248] *SCNI*, chapter 3.

[249] "Some Aspects of the Changing Order in India During the Śaka-Kuṣāṇa Age", op. cit., p. 81f.

[250] *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, ed, B. Nanjio (Kyoto, 1956), pp. 362, 363, vv. 786, 788. The last section of his text appears to have been composed after A.D. 443; ibid. tr., D.T. Suzuki (London, 1973) (Reprint), Introduction, p. xliv. The evidence of this text may be set alongside that of the *Mahāsupina Jātaka*, noticed above.

[251] See, for example, Junagarh Inscription of Skandagupta (*Select Inscriptions*, p. 309, fn. 3).

[252] For the modified version of the *varṇa*-duties, for the deep concern to buttress the local set-up by a religious ideology, and for the conception of *ārdhika* (share-cropper) as a separate mixed caste in this text, see *SCNI*, pp. 9f., 15, 168.

[253] *Parāśara*, 1.24. The real issue involved here cannot be evaded by saying that the author simply wanted to attribute more authority to his work (cf. Robert Lingat, *The Classical Law of India*, tr., J.D.M. Derrett, Indian edn, 1973, p. 187). However, Parāśara did not apparen-

tly think that the prescriptions offered by his smṛti supersede all those designed for earlier ages.

[254] *Bṛhannāradiya P.*, 22.17. The Purāṇa states that a man violating *deśācāra* was deemed as degraded (*patitaḥ*) and was expelled from the community (*sarvavarṇabahiṣkṛtaḥ*). The commentary of Medhātithi on the *Manu* (IX. 112) reveals that the law prescribed by Dharmaśāstra was not observed in all regions and localities owing to the hold of regional and local customs (*deśadharma*). The term *deśa* used in this context refers to small localities as well; for in the commentary of Kṣīrasvāmin on the *Amarakośa* (II. 1.8) it has been explained as *sthānamātram*.

[255] *Bṛhannārdīya P.*, 22.11.

[256] Ibid. 22.12-6. The *kalivarjya* doctrine appears to have developed after the fourth century A.D. (K.V.R. Aiyangar, Introduction to *Bṛhaspatismṛti*, Baroda, 1941, p. 181). Lingat, op. cit. p. 188, is inclined to trace the germs of the idea of *kalivarjya* to the theory of Parāśara that his rules were valid for the Kali age. In fact both the theory of Parāśara and the idea of *kalivarjya* were the product of the changed social conditions.

[257] According to Marx, the rules originally born of the material conditions "are raised to the status of laws much later" (*The Poverty of Philosophy*, p. 118).

[258] The *Vāyu P.* (40. 6ff.) reveals that the phase of transition was throughout characterized by various manifestations of the split between the old and the new. But the phase of transition started earlier.

[259] R.S. Sharma also thinks that in the sixth and seventh centuries "ancient India was coming to an end and medieval India was taking shape" ('Problem of Transition from Ancient to Medieval in Indian History", op. cit., p. 9). He has thrown some valuable light on the social changes in early medieval India (R.S. Sharma, *Social Changes in Early Medieval India*, Delhi, 1969).

[260] This is indeed a universal feature, cf. I.M. Diakonoff, op. cit., p. 128.

4

NOBORU KARASHIMA

The Prevalence of Private Landholding in the Lower Kaveri Valley in the Late Coḷa Period and its Historical Implications

When we go through the late Coḷa inscriptions[1] in Tiruchirapalli district, keeping in mind the problem of land holdings in those days, we shall immediately notice the fact that there are many inscriptions recording land transfers between individuals or between individuals and temples. In contrast to this, in early Cōḷa times land transfers of a private nature were scarcely recorded except in the case of land sale by brāhmaṇas in their *brahmadēya* villages. It seems that in the early Coḷa days private landholding and especially private transfer of land was restricted to some extent or otherwise scarcely practised since the communal feeling among villagers in ordinary peasant villages was very strong. In contrast to this, we find recorded in the late Coḷa inscriptions many land transfers

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between individuals in the peasant villages, indicating the prevalence of private landholding in this period. Consequently in the late Coḷa period, some wealthy people seem to have been able to acquire a large extent of land becoming as big landlords or local chiefs. This process of the emergence of locally influential landlords is indicated also by the remarkable increase in the number of people towards the end of the Cōḷa rule who held such significant titles as *araiyan*, *uṭaiyān*, *āḷvān*, etc. showing powerful positions they had attained.

From the viewpoint of social stratification in relation to landholdings, we are able to say that the landholders in the early *Coḷa* times, being themselves the cultivators, formed only one stratum. In the late stage, however, there existed two distinct strata, i. e., landholders and cultivators. This is easily inferred from the emergence of such big landlords who held large extents of land covering several villages.

The above is the outline of the argument I have made in the paper entitled "The New Agrarian Order Appearing in the Lower Kaveri Valley Towards the Close of the Coḷa Rule" which I read at the 5th International Conference-Seminar of Tamil Studies held in Madurai in January 1981.* In that paper I have examined the condition of some seven villages in the present Lalgudi taluk of Tiruchirapalli district by analysing the late Coḷa inscriptions of the Jambukesvaram temple recording land transactions. One of those villages is Isaṉaikuṟai, the present Esanakorai, selected by us for a field survey. In another paper entitled "Land Transfer as seen in the Later Coḷa Inscriptions of Vedaranyam",[2] I have clarified the point that in Thanjavur district also there were many private land transfers in the late Coḷa period. In the present paper which constitutes part of the report of our study of the historical background of the villages of Tiruchirapalli district, I have examined many unpublished inscriptions of the district to further support the findings of the two previous papers mentioned above and to advance the argument further[3].

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Prevalence of Private Landholding in the Lower Kaveri Valley in the late Coḷa Period.

In the Śiva temple of Ūṭṭattūr there remain seven inscriptions of Rājarāja III[4] recording land transactions between individuals. They are all recorded in the *Annual Report on (South) Indian Epigraphy* for the year 1912 and are as follows:

No. 500 (RJ3: Regnal year 15+1) records that a Curutimān[5] and his nephew who had *Kāṇi* rights (*Kāṇi uṭaiyān*) in Pāṭāvūr[6] sold their *kāṇi* land comprising *nañcey* (wet land)2+3/4+vēli[7] and *puñcey* (dry land)40+3/4+ *veli*[7] in Vaṭa-pāṭāvūr to another by the Curutimān,name of Nāyan Coṟan āna Iruṅkoḷan (hereafter NCI), who had *kāṇi* in Neṟkuḷam, the present Neikuḷam (another village selected for our field survey).

No. 493 (RJ3: 16+1) records that Piramātarāya Muttaraiyan sold his *kāṇi* land (*nañcey* 1+1/2 *veli*, *puñcey* x[8]) which seems to have been in Neṟkuḷam, to Coṟan koṇṭān āna Ilaṅkecuratevar (hereafter CKI), who was his Curutimān subordinate (*aṭiyān*) and who had *kāṇi* in Nerkulam.

No. 497 (RJ3: 16+1) records a land sale by four Curutimāns who had some rights (*uṭaiyān*)[9] in Ten-pātāvūr to NCI who appeared in No. 500. The land sold consisted of *mani* (a house site) (X)and *puñcey* (X). One of the sellers had *pēraiyan* title and another,*nāṭāḷvān* title.[10]

No. 499 (RJ3: 16+1) records that Mallan Cīyan āna Piramātarāya Muttaraiyan (hereafter MCPM) who was *Uṟṟatūr nāṭṭuṭaiyān*[11] and seems to have been the seller of No. 493, sold his *kāṇi* land *nañcey* 2/20+*vēli*) in Urrattūr to NCI who was one of his soldiers (*akampaṭiyār*)[12] and who had some right in Neṟkuḷam.

No. 501 (RJ3: 16+1) records another similar land sale by MCPM to NCI. The land comprising *nañcey* 1+3/4+*veli*, *fuñcey* 15+1/2 *veli*, *manai*, *tōṭṭam* (garden land), etc. was situated in Vaṭapāṭāvūr which he owned as his *kāṇi*.

No. 495 (RJ3: 18) records that MCPM sold one half of the village Nakkampāṭi consisting of *nañcey*, *puñcey ūr-nattam* (the main habitation site in a village), etc , to one of his soldiers in Neṟkuḷam.

No. 496 (RJ3: 18) records that a Curutimān residing in Neṟkuḷam sold his land (*nañcey* 6/20 *veli*) in Neṟkuḷam to CKI who had rights in Neṟkuḷam. The land sold is stated to have been owned by the seller after having purchased it from MCPM.

Besides the above six late Coḷa inscriptions, there is one Pāṇḍyan inscription in Uṭṭattūr, which records a similar land transaction. That is:

No. 498 (JS) records that a Curutimān having *kāṇi* in Neṟkuḷam, one of several villages which he owned, sold one fourth of Neṟkuḷam to another Curutimān residing in a hamlet of Tiruvellarai.[13]

In Periya-kurukkai, we have two inscriptions which record land donation to a temple, and through which we are able to know how the donors had acquired the land they donated. These inscriptions are recorded in *ARE*-1926 and are as follows.

No. 625 (RJ3: 26) records that Cokkan Malaikalantān Tennavaraiyan who was a village *uṭaiyān* of Kurukkai (the present day Periya-kurukkai) donated the village of Tattankuricci[14] to the Śiva temple in Kurukkai. The donor had purchased Tattankuṟicci in a government auction (*irārā-peruvilai*) and had already donated one fourth of it to the said temple. Thus by adding the remaining three fourths, he donated the entire village.

In No. 267 (RJ3: 27) the donor who appeared in the previous inscription donated to the same Śiva temple land consisting of *nañcey* 1+1/2+ *veli* and *puñcey* 10+1/2+*veli* which he had acquired in Kurukai as his own, and also one eighth of the land of Caṉmaṅkalam[15] comprising *ūr-nattam, nañcey, puñcey* etc. Caṉmaṅkalam was entirely owned by him and was in the same *nāḍu* as Kurukkai. It is also stated that three eighths of the land of Caṉmaṅkalam had already been donated by him to brāhmaṇas.

Next, we shall examine an inscription *ARE*-1938/39, No. 158 of Tiruppangili temple which records a land sale in the reign of Rājarāja III. It states that three brāhmaṇas, who were members of the *sabhā* of the *brahmadēya* Toṭaiyūr,[16] sold land amounting to 60 *veli* (*puñcey*) to a governor (*maṇḍalamutali*) who served king Sundara Pāṇḍya and who had the title *maḷavaraiyan* In the portion of the inscription describing the land excluded from the sale, we find 40 *vēli* of land (*nattam*, *nīr-nilam* [wet paddy field] and *puñcey* surrounding the *nīr-*

nilam) already sold by them to another high official who had the title *viḷupparaiyan*[17]. In the same temple there are several other inscriptions which record further sale of land by the brāhmaṇas of Toṭaiyūr.

In Jambukesvaram temple on Srirangam island, there exist many late Coḷa inscriptions recording land sales, 16 of which I have already examined in the paper mentioned above ("The New Agrarian Order . . ."). However, now we shall examine five of these inscriptions (*ARE*, 1937/38) which were not covered in that paper.

No. 37 (RJ3: 16+1) records that one Darumapuram-uṭaiyān[18] sold some land in Vaḷāṭi (the present vālāḍi near Srirangam on the northern bank of the river Kaveri) to the Jambukesvaram temple. The land which is stated to have been purchased from seven Vāḷāṭi-uṭaiyāns was enjoyed by the Darumapuram-uṭaiyān as his own (*eṉṉuṭaiya*) It comprised *nañcey* (1+1/2+ *vēli*) including both single and double crop lands, *puñcey*, *ūr nattam*, *pulaiccērinattam* (habitation site of the Pulaiyas) and *manaiviṭu* (house). The extent of *puñcey ūr-nattam*, etc. is stated to have been of the same proportion as that of the *nañcey* land sold to the whole extent of *nañcey* in the village.

No. 38 (KL3: 21) records a royal order confirming a Paḷuvūrkiḷavan[19] to the right of possession of land and No. 39 (KL3: 21) records the administrative instructions for executing the royal order given in no. 38. From these two inscriptions we know that to Paḷuvūr village, which the Paḷuvūr-kiḷavan owned as his own,he added another 21 *veli* or so of land thus founding a new village and that his life-time possession (*janmakāṇi*) of this new amount of land was confirmed in the royal order.

Similarly from nos. 40 (KL3) and 41 (KL3) which record the royal order for the confirmation of the right of possession and the administrative instructions respectively, we are able to know that the same Paḷuvūr-kiḷavan had *kāṇi* land in five other villages. Some detail is lost due to damage to the inscriptions, but it seems that the plots of land in five other villages were put together to form a new village which he was allowed to possess for his life time.

Finally we shall examine one inscription *ARE*-1939/40, no. 388 from Uyyakoṇḍa-Tirumalai temple on the southern bank of the river Kaveri. Though much damaged, it provides us with the following information. A merchant (Kulōttuṅgacoḷa vicaya-pālan) who was a village-*kiḻavan* purchased the land of many villages in a *nāḍu* and founded a new town by inviting merchants (*viyāpārigaḷ*) to come from elsewhere and granting them *kāṇi* rights to the town land. This creation of a new town was sanctioned by the king and was named after him as Koṅkukoṇṭacōḻapuram. The amount of land purchased seems to have been quite large, since we find mention of pieces of land consisting of 19 *veli*, 60 *veli* etc. and the merchant himself obtained the *kāṇi* land of 25 *vēli* in that town.

The first thing that we are able to know from the above examination is that there occurred many land transfers through sales and donations during the late Coḷa period. This is quite in accordance with findings of the previous two papers mentioned above.

Secondly, as to the rights on land transferred, we are able to ascertain from the contents of many inscriptions that they were *kāṇi* rights. The word *kāṇi* originally meant "hereditary rights", and when applied to land, we may regard it as the right of possession. It is certainly not the right of mere cultivation, unless it is prefixed by the word *uḻavu* (cultivation). Moreover, in many cases it may have carried a further sense beyond the mere right of possession to a certain plot of land. It seems to have meant the right to lead a privileged life in the village based on the possession of land there. The Persian word *mirās* which replaced the word *kāṇi* in the British revenue documents in the 18th and 19th centuries apparently conveyed such rights,[20] and thus the same meaning may be applied to *kāṇi* also. In the case of transfer of parts of a village (such as half, quarter etc.) there is found in the inscriptions examined above, special mention made regarding the inclusion of a variety of land types such as *nañcey*, *puñcey*, *ūr-nattam*, *kuḷam* (pond), *pulaiccēri*, etc. in the formation of a set, which indicates a broader sense of the usage of *kāṇi*. In one inscription of the Jambukesvaram temple (no. 37) it is stated that the proportion of one's own *nañcey* land to the entire *nañcey* land in the village should be applied to the other categories of land such as *puñcey*, *nattam*, etc. indicating that the possession of *nañcey*, the most fertile land in the village, composes the core of the *kāṇi* right. However, it is not clear whether in all cases the word *kāṇi* carried such a broader sense. The *kāṇi* right in this wider meaning could have been exercised only when the unity of the landholders in the village as a community was unchallenged. Otherwise, it might have meant merely the right to possession of certain plots of land in the village.

We shall now examine the point as to who transferred the land, in other words, who owned the land. It has already become clear that they were the *kāṇi* right holders enjoying a privileged life in the village based on their possession of land. The next thing we notice from the above examination is the emergence of a number of landholders who possessed a large extent of land. For example, Piramātarāya Muttaraiyan who is known from the Ūṭṭattur inscriptions to have sold so much land; Māyan Cōṟan āna Iruṅkōḷan, a Curutimān of Neṟkuḷam, who on the other hand is known to have accumulated some of the land; Tennavaraiyan of the Periya-kurukkai inscription who donated to the temple a village of his own possession and a large extent of land in two other villages, one of which also was owned by him; Maḻavaraiyan and Viḻupparaiyan of the Tiruppangili inscriptions who had 60 *veli* and 40 *veli* of land respectively; Paḻuvur-kiḻavan or the Jambukesvaram temple inscriptions who was able to make the king approve the foundation of two (?) villages of his possession; and the big merchant of the Uyyakonda-Tirumalai inscription who founded a new town and had 25 *veli* of land as his *kāṇi* in it. These are some examples of the big landholders who appeared in the late Coḷa inscriptions in the Tiruchirapalli district. We may presume from the above, therefore, that big landlords were not uncommon in those days in the district, especially in Lalgudi taluk.

The point that such landholders were influential persons in the locality or even in the central government has been made clear by the examination of the titles they held. Most of them had the titles, *uṭaiyān*, *kiḷavan*, *āḷvān* or *aṟaiyan* including *viḻupparaiyan* which seems to have been conferred on officials of the central government. One such title holder is actually known to have been *maṇṭalamutali* (governor). This point has been discussed more elaborately in the previous papers[21] and need not be repeated here.

Historical Process Leading to the Prevalence of Private Landholding

We shall now consider the historical process which caused private landhlding to become prevalent and led to the emergence of big landlords towards the end of the Coḷa rule.

Before proceeding to the examination, however, we have to make the following points clear again: that in the early Coḷa times land was communally held by the people (*ūr*)[22] in the non-*brahmadēya* peasant villages as the feeling of solidarity in these village communities was so strong. It seems that land was privately held only when there was some particular necessity for it, as in the case of village servants, such as *madhyastha* (arbitrator), *kaṇakku* (accountant), etc., or members of the servicing castes, such as the musician, astrologer, etc. who were assigned land for their remuneration. This point was first suggested by me in the paper which I submitted to the first International Conference-Seminar of Tamil Studies held in 1966 in Kuala Lumpur[23] and was confirmed elsewhere in another paper of mine.[24] Moreover, in the inscriptions surveyed for this project also, we find this to be the case, again strenghening the argument. Namely, out of 11 early Coḷa inscriptions of Kumāravayalūr on the southern bank of the river Kaveri recording land sale or donation, 10 are records of transactions made by *ūr* and not by individual villagers. All the lands sold were finally either donated to the temple or utilized for public purposes and not for private enjoyment It seems, therefore, that in the early period land in Kumāravayalūr was in general owned jointly by the *ūr* members.

From the viewpoint of social stratification, in relation to landholding, the *ūr* members who appeared as landholders in the early Coḷa inscriptions were themselves the cultivators and therefore, landholders and cultivators were not separated from each other as different social strata, except in the case of *brahmadēya* villages where the landholding brāhmaṇas did not cultivate their land themselves. On the contrary, judging from the existence of such big landlords who often had entire villages as their own *kāṇi*, the landholders and cultivators seem to have composed two distinct strata in the late Cōḷa villages.

Since we find such a difference in the landholding conditions between the early and late Coḷa periods, we need to raise the question of how this difference came into being. For that question I have already given the following answers as assumptions in the previous paper "The New Agrarian Order . . .".

Firstly, there are economic reasons. Through the imperialistic expansion of the Coḷa empire during the reigns of Rājarāja I and his son Rājēndra I in the 10th and 11th centuries, a large amount of wealth was brought from outside in the form of booty, tribute and land revenue,[25] which was distributed to the people of the central region of the empire, that is the lower Kaveri vallay.[26] At the same time, the productivity of the land in this area seems to have increased greatly owing to the development of the irrigation system. Many dams and water channels were constructed during the period in the lower Kaveri valley.[27] These facts must have enabled some landlords to have become richer than others thus creating differentiation in and stratification of the rural society.

Secondly, there are administrative or bureaucratic reasons: The granting of villages to brāhmaṇas in the early and middle periods, and to government officers in the middle period created a fair amount of privately held land in the area. This must have paved the way for the prevalence of private landholding among the common people in the peasant villages in the late period.

These changes seem to have occurred mainly in the lower Kaveri valley, the central region of the Coḷa empire. The process is also shown by the fact that during the late period in this region there was an increase, as mentioned earlier, in the number of men holding such significant titles as *uḷaiyān*, *araiyan*, *āḷvān*, etc. which indicate their landholding and influential position.[28]

Now we shall examine some more inscriptions in relation to the points discussed above.

First, there are two inscriptions (*ARE*, 1943/44) of Valikandapuram belonging to the middle (third) period of the Coḷa rule, which mention a certain Cuttamalan āna Ceyaṅkoṇṭa-coḷa Vannāṭṭuṭaiyān who had *kāṇi* rights in a *nāḍu* (vannāḍu). Namely, no. 283 (KL1: 20) records that this *naṭṭuṭaiyān*[29] granted to the temple as tax free (*iṛaiyili*) temple land (*tirunāmattukkāṇi*) 20 *veli* of land consisting of land in 20 villages (one *vēli* in each village) in the *nāḍu* of his own *kāṇi*. According to no. 274 (KL1: 29) which is dated 9 years after the previous inscription, the same person granted a village of his own *kāṇi* to the Śiva temple of Valikandapuram in return for having been bestowed a child by the grace of the God. If we identify KL in these inscriptions with Kulōttuṅga I though there is a slight doubt about doing so,[30] these are among the earliest inscriptions referring to the *kāṇi* rights held by high government officials, for *nāṭṭutaiya* is thought to have been an important office relating to *nāḍu* administration.

Next, one inscription of Rājarāja II remaining in Lalgudi from the middle (third) period gives us an example of the accumulation of large extent of land by high officials in the middle of this period. According to this inscription (*ARE*, 1929 no. 128) a certain kūṛṛuṭaiyān Perikan who had the title of *mūvendaveḷān* having purchased as his *kāṇi* four large pieces of land 16+, 46+, 8+ and 54+ *veli* respectively) and having given new names to each of them, was permitted by the king to own them as his own villages. The title *mūvendaveḷān* is the one which was often bestowed by the king to high ranking officials of the government.[31] This incription gives, therefore, an example of the acquisition of land by such officials in the middle period of the Coḷa rule.

Another Valikandapuram inscription, no. 265 of *ARE*, 1943/44 (RD2: 11), records a land grant to the temple by the person who had *kāṇi* rights to the *nāḍu* as in the cases previously observed (nos. 283 & 274). This time, however, the person is not *nāṭṭuṭaiyān* but *nāṭāḷvān*, and the land granted to the temple as its *kāṇi* (*tirunāmatukkāṇi*) was Valikandapuram itself (the whole town) or the cultivated land ((*kaḷani puṛani*) of it. *Nāṭāḷvān* was the officer or chief who had responsibility for the *nāḍu* administration and therefore, this gives a further example of the ownership of large extents of land by high officials or by influential local chiefs in this period.

Lastly, two inscriptions (*ARE*, 1926) belonging to the same period and remainding in Kīḷ-paḷuvūr give us a very interesting picture regarding land acquisition in the period. No. 259 (RD 2: 11) describes the distressed condition of the *kāṇi* holders of the Kīḷ-paḷuvūr area of the northern bank of the Koḷḷiḍam river, who had been deprived of the *kāṇi* right, and gives a royal order to protect them. According to this inscription, "the *kāṇi* right of this area should not be claimed by anyone, unless one is the *kāṇi* holder from olden times, even if one says that he is a kṣatriya (*irācukulavar*), or that he comes from the southern bank of the Koḷḷiḍam river, or that he bought the land in a government auction (*rājarājaperuvilai*) or from the cultivators (*kuṭivilai*) or from the people who had purchased it in a government auction, before the 10th regnal year of the king". It states also that in the villages (names of the five villages are given) which had been converted into *devadāna*,[32] *paḷḷiccanda*,[33] etc. on the condition of *kuṭinīkki* (tenants being evicted), the old *kāṇi* holders who had been deprived of their rights should have these *kāṇi* rights returned again. Further, it states that the people who lived on the southern bank of the river Koḷḷiḍam should not buy land in this Kīḷ-paḷvūr area on the northern bank from the 11th year onwards.

This last statement which prohibited the purchase of land by people coming from the southern bank of the river Koḷḷiḍam is of great significance, since that region forms the very fertile central delta area of the Kaveri river, where the productivity of land in Coḷa times was very high. The existence of a large difference in productivity between the northern and southern banks in Coḷa times is attested to in certain inscriptions.[34] If we read this statement of prohibition keeping the above facts in mind, we may formulate a picture in which persons who had accumulated much wealth through ownership of the highly productive land on the southern bank, namely the locally influential chiefs, merchants, etc., began to purchase land on the northern bank for further investment.[35]

Another point which attracts our attention is that the acquisition of many *kāṇi* lands by the kṣatriyas (*irācukulavar*) seems to have troubled the old *kāṇi* holders in this locality. Relating to this point, another inscription (no. 257, RD 2: 11) provides us with the following information. Ever since the villages in Kuṉṟa kūṟṟam around Kīḻ-paḻuvūr were converted into military holdings (*paṭai-paṟṟu*), the local *kāṇi* holders ceased to cultivate the land. Therefore, the king issued an order to protect the local *kāṇi*-holders by making clear the terms of cultivation under which they had rights to the land so that they could resume the cultivation of land.

That which we are able to know from the foregoing examination may be summed up as follows. From the viewpoint of social stratification in the consequence of economic development during the middle Coḷa period, the inscriptions of Kīḻ-paḻuvūr reveal the distressed condition of the *kāṇi*-holders of the northern bank of the Koḷḷiṭam river who were troubled by the investment of people from the southern bank, the area of high productivity. This clearly shows a difference in economic development between the two regions.

Regarding the point of land grants to officials and the accumulation of land by them, the inscriptions of Valikandapuram and Lalgudi give us a very clear picture.

Those two points are ones which have already been suggested in the previous papers and which have now been confirmed in this one. However, there is another point which has emerged only through our examination in this paper. That is the appearance of military landholdings in the middle and late Coḷa periods. We know of this appearance through such expressions as *irācukulavar* or *paṭai-paṟṟu* which have occurred in the inscriptions examined. Moreover, a very vivid picture can be obtained from the Uṭṭattūr inscriptions examined earlier. From those inscriptions we know that Piramātarāya Muttaraiyan transferred much of his land to his military subordinates or soldiers who were stationed in Neṟkuḷam and other places. Considering the point that those soldiers were Curutimāns, it is not unlikely that they were the people who were stated as *irācukulavar* in the Kīḻ-paḻuvūr inscriptions.[26] It may be assumed that the communities such as Curutimān, Paḷḷi, etc. who had been living in the hilly area left the hills and came down to the plain to serve as military forces for Coḷa monarchs of the second period like Rājarāja I and Rājendra I who needed military forces to pursue their imperialistic policies[27] In the later stages (3rd and 4th periods) they seem to have begun to exercise their military power for their own purpose to acquire more land. This process was accelerated by the political disorder towards the end of the Coḷa rule.

There are two more points to be noticed. As indicated by the Jambukesvaram inscriptions, Hindu temples of the period seem to have accumulated a large extent of land. As those temples grew and became big landlords, much of the accumulated land seems to have been leased out. We have to make study of this lease system and find out whether any particular segment of the society benefited from the system. In contrast to the accumulation of land by temples, the brāhmaṇas who held *brahmadēya* land in the early and middle periods seem to have lost at least some of their old holdings in the late period. However, throughout the succeeding periods down to the 18th century, the custom of granting land to brāhmaṇas continued to be practised by kings and other influential persons. These vicissitudes of the brāhmaṇa's economic position through the ages require further study.

Conclusion

In conclusion, towards the close of Coḷa rule private landholding became prevalent and there took place many land transfers between individuals or between individuals and temples. As a consequence, some people accumulated large amount of land and grew as locally influential big landlords. Counterbalancing this, some people lost possession of their *kāṇi* lands and must have slipped down to the position of tenants or landless cultivators. This indicates the emergence of a new agrarian order in the lower Kaveri valley in the 13th century. Though we are still unable to say whether this means the appearance of a feudal system or not, this new agrarian order seems to have brought changes in the relations of many communities belonging to the locality. The prevalence of social disorder and many social conflicts are known from the inscriptions of the period. Therefore, we may say that the 13th century was the period in which the whole society of the lower Kaveri valley experienced turmoil. Our next task, then, should be to clarify what arose from this turmoil.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1] The periodization used in this paper for the Coḷa period is as follows: The first period: from Vijayālaya to Uttama (849-895 A D); the second period: from Rājarāja I to Adhirājēndra (1985-170; A.D.), the third period: from Kulōttuṅga I to Rājādhirāja II (1070-1179 A.D.) and the fourth period: from Kulōttuṅga III to Rājarāja III (1179-1272 A.D.). However, I have used the word *early* for the first period, the word *late* for the fourth period, and the word *middle* for the second and third periods. When necessary, I have made distinction between the second and third periods in the middle period by using the words *second* and *third*.

[2] N. Jagadeesan & S. Jeyapragasam eds, *Homage to a Historian: A Festschrift*, Madurai, 1976, pp. 167-173.

[3] By the kind permission of Dr. B K. Thapar, Director General, and Mr. K.G. Krishnan, Chief Epigraphist of the Archaeological Survey of India, I was able to utilize the transcripts of the unpublished inscriptions of Tiruchirapalli district for this study, for which I am grateful to them. My thanks are also due to Dr. Y. Subbarayalu, Lecturer, Madurai-Kamaraj University who kindly helped me in reading those transcripts and also made the map.

[4] The abbreviations used for the kings in this paper are as follows: RJ for Rājarāja, KL for Kulōttuṅga, RD for Rājādhirāja and JS for Jaṭāvarman Sundara Pāṇḍya.

[5] Curutimān is a caste presently found mainly in the Lalgudi and Perambalur taluks in Tiruchirapalli district. They seem to be closely related to Paḷḷi, Vanniya or Akambaḍiyār castes and claim kṣatriya origin.

[6] This is the present Pāḍālūr in the Perambalur taluk adjacent to Neikuḷam to the north-west.

[7] The unit of land measurement employed in the inscriptions is *veli* and its fractions. The omission of small fractions is indicated by a + mark at the end.

[8] The mark X indicates that the land measurement is not given or not clear.

[9] The *uṭaiyāṉ* title prefixed by a village name indicates that the holder of this title has some hereditary right, most probably ownership of *kāṇi* land, in the village, unless the village is a holy place like Tiruchiṟṟambalam.

[10] The literal meaning of *peraraiyan* or *peraiyan* is "great king" and that of *nāṭaḷvāṉ* "one who rules *nāḍu*". For further detail regarding these titles, see N. Karashima & Y. Subbarayalu, "A Statistical Study of Personal Names in Tamil Inscriptions, Interim Report II," *Computational Analyses of Asian and African Languages*, no. 3 (1976), 9-20 and also in N. Karashima, Y. Subbarayalu & T. Matsui, *A Concordance of the Names in the Cola Inscriptions*, i,

Madurai 1978, Appendix 3, and N. Karashima, "The New Agrarian order . . .".

[11] Uṟṟatūr is the old form of the present Ūṭṭattūr and was the headquarters of the Uṟṟattūr-nāḍu in Coḷa times. Uṟṟattūrnāṭṭuṭaiyān signifies, therefore, that the holder of the title had some right (most probably ownership) for Uṟṟattūrnāḍu.

[12] Akampaṭiyār is presently a caste found mainly in South Arcot, Tiruchirappalli and Thanjavur districts claiming kṣatriya origin. In Coḷā inscriptions, however, it seems to have meant soldiers.

[13] This is the present Tiruveḷḷarai in the western part of the Lalgudi taluk.

[14] This is the present Thachankurichi to the south of Periyakurukkai.

[15] This is the present Shanamangalam to the west of Periyakurukkai.

[16] This is the present Toḍaiyūr to the south of Thiruppangili.

[17] As to the point that *viḷupparaiyan* is the title given to high officials in the Government, see N. Karashima & Y. Subbarayalu, "A Statistical Study . . .".

[18] We may be able to identify this Darumapuram with the present Dharmapuram near Kumbakonam in Thanjavur district.

[19] The word *kiḷavan* comes from *kiḷamai* which means "possession" or "ownership". Therefore, the *kiḷavan* which is prefixed by a village name (in this case Paḷuvur) indicates that the holder of this title had some right (most probably the ownership of *kāṇi* land) in the village, as in the case of the *uṭaiyān* title prefixed by a village name. We may well be able to identify this Paḷuvūr with the present Palur 3 km north of the river Kollidam on the left side of Madras Trunk Road.

[20] See "A Reply to the First Seventeen Questions stated in a Letter from the Secretary to Government in the Revenue Department Dated the 2nd August 1814 Relative to Mirasi Right" submitted by Francis W. Ellis to the British Government in Madras in 1816.

[21] N. Karashima & Y. Subbarayalu, "A Statistical Study . . ." and also N. Karashima, "The New Agrarian Order . . .".

[22] *Ur* as found in the inscriptions is the village assembly formed in the ordinary peasant village other than *brahmadeyas*. The core of the assembly seems to have been the landholding cultivators.

[23] N. Karashima, "Allur and Isanamangalam: Two South Indian Villages in Cola Times," *Proceedings of the First International Conference-Seminar of Tamil Studies-1966*, i, Kuala Lumpur, 1968, 426-436, and also in *IESHR*, iii, No. 2, 150-62.

[24] N. Karashima, "Land Donation to Hindu Temples in Medieval South India" (in Japanese), *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, no. 2 (1969) 29-65.

[25] One Thanjavur inscription (*SII*, ii, 92) records the order of Rājarāja I that the revenue of certain villages in Sri Laka which he had conquered should be remitted to the temple for their expenditure.

[26] George W. Spencer, "Temple Money-Lending and Livestock Redistribution in Early Tanjore" *IESHR*, v, no. 3 (1968), 277-93.

[27] S.Y. Krishnaswamy, "Major Irrigation System of Ancient Tamilnadu", *Proceedings of the First International Conference-Seminar of Tamil Studies-1966*, i, Kuala Lumpur, 1968, 451-61.

[28] See N. Karashima & Y. Subbarayalu, "A Statistical Study . . .".

[29] See note 11 above.

[30] The ground on which we identify this Kulōttuṅga with KL 1 is as follows: The donor in this inscription has Ceyaṅkoṉṭacoḷa (Jayaṅkoṇḍa-coḷa) as a part of his title. So far as is known from the published Coḷa inscriptions, none of the holders of this Ceyaṅkoṉṭacoḷa as a part of his title belongs to the late Coḷa period, into which the reign of KL 3 falls. All of them belong to either the second or third period. However, the possession of such a large extent of land as this donor possessed is mostly found in the inscriptions of the late period.

[31] See N. Karashima & Y. Subbarayalu, "A Statistical Study . . .".

[32] Land or vilage donated to Hindu temples.

[33] Land or village donated to Jain or Buddhist temples.

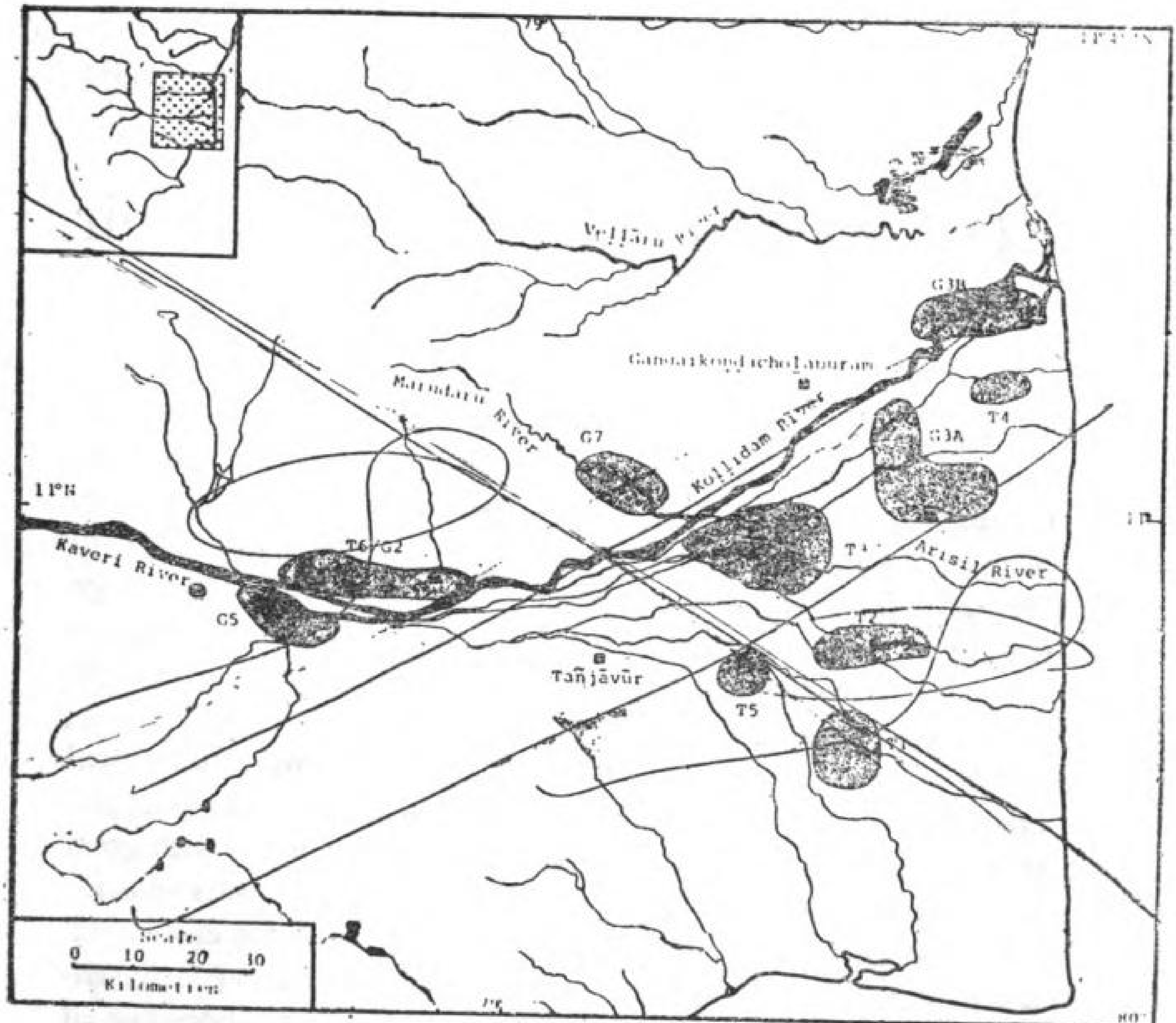
[34] N. Karashima, "Land Revenue Assessment in Coḷa Times as seen in the inscriptions of the Thanjavur and Gangaikondacholapuram Temples", *Studies in Socio-cultural Change in Rural Villages in Tiruchirapalli District, Tamilnadu, India*, no. 1, (1980).

[35] As to the economic development of the region South of the Kollidam river, See R. Champakalakshmi, "Growth of urban centres in South India: Kuḍamūḳku-Paḷaiyāṛai, the twin-city of the Coḷas", *Studies in History*, 1, no. 1 (1979).

[36] As mentioned in note 5 above, Curutimān caste claims kṣatriya origin.

[37] An inscription of Singalāndapuram which is situated on the foot of the Paccai hills records that in the region of Rājēndra I there occurred an invasion of the Kurūmbas and the Vanniya (both hill tribes in those days) which gave trouble to the villagers of the locality. No. 229 of *ARE*, 1943/44.

[38] In Vijayanagar times Nāyakas seem to have utilized a lease system of temple land for their accumulation of land. See N. Karashima, "Nāyakas as Lease-holders of Temple lands", *JESHO*, xix, pt 2, 227-32.


79°
Veḷḷāru River
G3B
Gangaikoṇḍacholapuram
Marudaru River
G7
Kollidam River
T4
G3A
11°N
T6/G2
Kaveri River
G5
T1
Arisil River
T2
Tañjāvūr
T5
Scale
0 10 20 30
Kilometres

Land Revenue Assessment in Cola Times.

5

D.D. KOSAMBI

Origins of Feudalism in Kashmir

Feudalism in India was so often a concomitant of Muslim rule that underlying causes are completely forgotten under the religious upheaval, or attributed to foreign domination. Kashmir, being a valley isolated from serious foreign intervention till long after feudalism had conquered, shows us that the change cannot be imputed either to theology or to the Mohammedan conquest. The natural course of events may be seen undisguised; in essence, the explanation applies to the rest of India also, allowing for minor details and particular variations due to local conditions. The need to import trade goods, especially salt and metals, difficult transport, lowering of grain prices with great increase in village settlements due to extensive water-works, meant concentration of wealth in a few hands for each small group of villages. A Kashmir village could not be as nearly self-sufficient as one in India, for the rigorous and more varied climate made it impossible to do without wool, which had to be produced for exchange against cereals as a commodity, as were grapes; this led to quicker development along the same road. In India, there arose a class of armed barons who expropriated the surplus for trade; in Kashmir, the man who had the surplus acquired more wealth by trade, took to arms, turned into a

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Ḍāmara. The caste system was never strong enough in Kashmir to prevent such direct change of class whenever economic advantage permitted. For that matter, it could not prevent this in India, but a formal change of caste had to be effected, which took far more time, and was not possible for individuals without great difficulty. The *agrahāra* grants made to brāhmaṇas did not prevent the rise of private (feudal) ownership of land, but rather served, in the trading environment, as model of the later *jāgīr*, whereas land in India proper continued to belong to the state till a later period. The conflict between king and Ḍāmara, feudal baron and central power, led ultimately to a Kashmirian Hindu king plundering temple property and melting down the images for profit, without change of religion or theological excuses, simply to maintain the army and a costly state apparatus. Because this could not continue forever, we have the ultimate victory of feudalism, and weakening of the central power.[1]

The gold washed in small amounts from Kashmir rivers and a few precious or semi-precious stones found in the hills never balanced the imports needed for the Valley population. Hence, they could not have created private property in land, nor made it worthwhile to expropriate the surplus from cultivators. It is known that the food-producing lands were held in common under tribal and early central rule; private enterprise is responsible for later specialized crops and conversely. Thus it was necessary to have a commodity that can be grown extensively on the land, particularly on the clayey lacustrine deposits (*uḍḍāru*, or *uḍar*) less productive with cereals; the commodity must be relatively high-priced, but still in great demand, easy to transport over the mountains to a large market, without giving rise to serious competition. These conditions are satisfied by the light and precious saffron (*Crocus sativus*) whose synonym *Kaśmīraja* proves the virtual monopoly over the Indian market enjoyed by Kashmir (because of its climate and soil) from a long time before the *Amarakośa* till the dominance of overseas trade. Chinese sources[2] show it being imported from its habitat Kaśhmir into China during the 3rd century A.D. Therefore it must have been exported to India from Kashmir at least that early. The original ritual use is reflected in the change of colour from *kāṣāya* (the present Banaras *katthai* red) to saffron for a Buddhist monk's robes; the demand as medicine, cosmetic, pigment, and condiment expanded insatiably. Without the Crocus or some equivalent commodity, the internal history of Kashmir would have been far less turbulent, as may be seen by comparison with the small neighbouring Himalayan valley Chamba, which shows relatively uneventful continuity of succession in the same dynasty, with people still worshipping images dedicated about 700 A.D. in temples standing over a thousand years.[8] It is known that saffron does not grow elsewhere on the Indian sub-continent, but its role in the means and relations of production for Kashmir has escaped our historians.

1. Caste and Class. The enduring isolation of Kashmir, due to difficulties of forcing the passes with trifling rewards of conquest justified Kalhaṇa's boast : "That country may be conquered by the force of spiritual merits but not by forces of soldiers" (1.39). Foreigners continued to enter as merchants, occasionally teachers and officials : even from Tibet, Lo-stonpa, (3.10); or Muktāpīḍa, Lalitāditya's chief minister (4.215 ff.) Caṇkuṇa (Tsian-kiun) from Chinese Turkestan. But the main influences cultivated or imported deliberately from outside the Valley were Indian, first Buddhism and then brāhmaṇism in its developed form. In 1 87, we have the first mention of an *agrahāra* being given to brāhmaṇas, by king Lava. Such donations are recorded by name throughout the eight books of the chronicle, indicating that brāhmaṇas were a main support of class-division, king, and state. Many of the priests were brought from outside; the Hūna king Mihiragula bestowed land upon "Brahmans from Gandhāra, resembling himself in their habits and verily the lowest of the twice-born" (1307). The "wise king" Gopāditya bestowed the "Gopa-*agrahāras* on Brahmans born in Ārya-deśa. He removed those who ate garlic to Bhūkṣīravaṭikā, and transferred the brāhmaṇas who had broken their rules of conduct to Khāsaṭā. Other Brahmans again of a holy life, whom he had brought from pure countries, he settled in Vaścikā and other *agrahāras*" (1.341-3). This incidentally shows that the notorious laxity of observances on the part of Kashmirian brāhmaṇas is of ancient standing.

The brāhmaṇas were not the only foreign ideological and priestly imports of use to the state. Buddhist monks are supposed to have become powerful from the time of king Jalauka (son of Aśoka) who is further credited with having introduced the four-caste class system, legal procedure, and a central administration headed by 18 officials (1.117-120) which continued as the standard form throughout Kashmirian history, with later modifications (4.141-3 etc). The monks nearly extinguished the tribal Nāga cults (1.177-8) which would have obstructed any central rule unless wiped out or assimilated by a state religion. The latter step was ultimately taken by brāhmaṇas who had been reduced to helplessness at the time of "the *bodhisattva*, Nāgārjuna." These priests gained a solid base among the people by writing the (still extant) *Nīlamata-purāṇa* (1.182-6) which gives official sanction to the Nāga cult ritual, readjusted conformably to standard brāhmaṇa practice and observances, with royal patronage from the time of Gonanda III. Free tribal elements continued in marginal localities, as for example *Khaśa* (=the present Khakha), while those absorbed may be reflected in the Kashmirian *Krām* names.

Apart from slackness in observances, the class behaviour of the brāhmaṇas forfeited their sanctity to a considerable extent Most of them were landholders or government officials. Many fought on the battle-field, arms in hand, solely for personal advancement unconnected with any religious or theological question (cf. 8.2319-2330; 8.3018; over 600 years earlier than in India proper); the brāhmaṇa Rakka rose from a mere foot-soldier to the position of prime minister (5.424 ff), participating in the usual court intrigues. Therefore the brāhmaṇas were not specially influential in politics as a priesthood except for a brief period under the brāhmaṇa king Yaśaskara (A.D. 939-948). On occasion, even their fasting to death was looked upon with contempt, without moving the king's heart in the least (4.631-39). One of the results of this conduct was the relative absence of theological controversies in Kashmir. Kings like Lalitāditya, scholars like Kṣemendra, paid equal reverence to all sects, without feeling discord or incongruity. Buddhist monasteries continued side by side with Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava temples, primitive worship of the Mothers with occasional human sacrifice, and still older cults of various Nāgas.

The kings, too, were often of doubtful lineage—as happened in the rest of India, though much better disguised there with brāhmaṇa aid. Utpala, founder of a dynasty, was the son of a spirit-distiller (4.677-9); the preceding Kārkoṭa dynasty was of still lower tribal origin (Stein I.p. 86). Ministers of low birth were not uncommon (8.181-5) while the *Khaśa* Tuṅga rose from a buffalo herdsman and letter-carrier to become favourite and minister of queen Diddā (6 318-321), virtually ruling the kingdom till his murder following a defeat outside Kashmir by Mahmūd of Ghazni about 1013 A.D. King Cakravarman (third reign A.D. 936-7) took a Ḍomb girl Haṃsī as his chief queen (5.359-87) raising her low relatives to the highest power; the same king outraged a brāhmaṇa's wife (5.402-3), yet brāhmaṇas unhesitatingly accepted *agrahāras* from him, as from his unspeakably cruel successor Unmattāvanti (5.440-442).

Thus the caste system in Kashmir was, in contrast to the rest of India, too thin a disguise for that of classes. The *agrahāra* became a hereditary *jāgīr* form of private property in land and as such Stein translates it. In 5.397-9 we have the village Helu given as *agrahāra* to the Ḍomb singer Raṅg and so recorded; this is unprecedented, there being no record of such a grant made to a non-priest, let alone a Ḍomb, for any purpose whatever, in any of the numerous surviving Indian copper plates. In addition to land grants, there was a later system of income-earning funds (*gañja*) established for charity, and administered by separate officials.

2. Development of irrigation. Before turning to feudalism proper, we have to trace another of its root causes, besides the above-mentioned land-grants and investment foundations (*gañja*) for brāhmaṇas and religious institutions. This, curiously enough, is the action of the central government in controlling floods and promoting irrigation. The earliest legends relate to divine intervention, which made a river-valley out of what had been a lake spreading over most of Kashmir; the existence of such a lake has some support in geology and varied deposits. The earliest mentioned irrigation canal, under king Suvarṇa (1.97), is identifiable and in use to this day. The later but still legendary king Dāmodara II was credited with building an irrigation dam, and several dykes for protection against floods (1.156-9). King Bālāditya's ministers built an embankment as well as a temple. The military achievements of king Muktāpiḍa-Lalitāditya (*circa* 699-736 A.D.), who overran most of India, and killed Yaśovarman of Kanauj, had a solid foundation in control and distribution of water in the Valley. Of course, his martial

exploits distracted attention from the real achievement, which is mentioned in passing : "At Cakradhara, he made an arrangement for conducting the water of the *Vitastā* (Jhelum) and distributing it to various villages by the construction of a series of water-wheels (4.191)....This country (of Kaśmīr) always (before) gave small produce, as it was (liable to be) flooded by the waters of the Mahāpadma lake (Vūlūr), and was intersected by (many) streams. When the waters had been drained off somewhat, through the great exertions of king Lalitāditya, it became productive to a small extent. Under the feeble kings who succeeded after the death of Jayāpīḍa, the country was again, just (as before) overtaken by disastrous floods (5.68-70)".

The great name in Kashmirian history is that of Suryya, a Caṇḍāla who was minister under Avantivarman (A.D. 855-883). He cleared the bed of the Vitastā after building a temporary dam; protected with embankments the spots regularly threateened by floods; arranged a new confluence for the Jhelum with the Indus and made complete irrigation scheme. The performance left an indelible impression upon Kashmir, and upon its chronicler :

"He made the different streams with their waters, which are (like) the quivering tongues (of snakes), move about according to his will, just as a conjurer (does with) the snakes (5.102)... Having thus raised the land from the water like another primeval Boar (Viṣṇu), he founded various villages which were filled with a multitude of people. Keeping out the water by means of (circular) dykes, he gave to these villages the appearance of round bowls (*kuṇḍa*). (Hence) the people called these (villages), which are amply provided with all (kinds of) foodstuffs, by the name of Kuṇḍala (5.105). . .After examining the different classes of land, he procured a supply of river water for the villages, which thus were no (longer) dependent only on the rainfall After watering all the villages (lands), he took from (each) village (some) soil, and ascertained, by (observing) the time it took to dry up, the period within which irrigation would be required (for each soil respectively). He then arranged (accordingly) on a permanent basis for the size and distribution of the watercourse for each village : and by (using for irrigation) the Ānūlā and other streams, embellished all regions with an abundance of irrigated fields which were distinguished for excellent produce

(5.109-112)...On the lands which he raised from the water, thousands of villages such as Jayasthala etc. were founded by Avantivarman and others (5.121)". Naturally, Kalhaṇa appraises Suyya's work as above that of the mythical Kaśyapa and Saṃkarṣaṇa, equating it to the achievements of four complete incarnations of Viṣṇu (5.113-5).

We do not hear of later kings anything beyond bare maintenance work at best. These sweeping, well-planned, scientifically tested, and carefully executed waterworks remain unique in Kashmir, without taking second place elsewhere in India even to grandiose projects like Bhoja's lake at Bhopāl (*IA*. xvii, 1888. 348-352).

The waterworks caused an increase of surplus which enabled new temples to be built and endowed with their own lands; fresh *agrahāras* were granted to brāhmaṇas; kings patronized learned scholars and poets; occasionally, military adventures were attempted outside Kashmir, not always with success. However, the Śāhī kings of Udabhāṇḍa remained closely related to Kashmir ruling princes. The army, bureaucracy, and taste for luxury were additional powerful factors in future decline. The most important result of the irrigation and drainage works, whereof all the others were concomitants, and ultimately also the cause of internal dissensions which made invasion a triviality, was the following : There, where previously from the beginning of things the purchase price of a *khāri* (=177 lbs.) of rice was 200 *dīnnāras* in times of great abundance, in that very land of Kaśmīr henceforth—O wonder !—the *khārī* of rice came to be bought for 36 *dīnnāras*" (5.116-7). This abundance disturbed the price structure, and balance of payments against imports, so as to accelerate greatly the tendencies that led to feudal dissensions and decay, tendencies that had remained latent and been counteracted hitherto by royal force. Administration of the new villages would strain the older state resources while increase in the number of clerical (*kāyastha*) officials for revenue collection would be disproportionately costly; the more so because most of the tribute collected from the peasantry disappeared into the pockets of the officials, without reaching the royal treasury. The traditional number—perhaps a legend of this period—of 66,063 Kashmir villages had shrunk to 2,870 with a total population of

814,000 according to the 1891 *Census*, while in 1835 a great famine had left only about 200,000 survivors.

3. The Ḍāmaras. The world Ḍāmara is peculiar to pre-Muslim Kashmir, meaning a local chief with some military power. After the time of Suyya, the quarrel between Ḍāmaras and king constitutes the principal motif of Kashmirian history. These chieftains made and unmade kings, fought battles with the central power and among themselves. In a word, they formed the equivalent of feudal barons far more than the *sāmantas* mentioned on occasion, who cannot have been tributary kings as elsewhere in classical Sanskrit. but were barons created by the court as counterpoise to the Ḍāmaras, as perhaps were the titulary Thakkuras. The question, then, is : what made a Ḍāmara ? There is no possibility of these people being a separate caste, or tribal chiefs surviving from ancient times, or army capatains settled on the land to become local counts. The name has no tribal meaning like that of the *khaśas*, does not survive as a *krām* today, though (Stein II. p. 306) many of them in the eastern *Maḍavarājya* portion of the Valley were recruited from the Lavanya group (7.1229). The Ḍāmaras were *invariably* to be found in the most fertile cultivated portions of Kashmir (Stein II. p. 307).

Lalitāditya is supposed to have left in his testament the following advice to his successors :

"Those who wish to be powerful in this land must always guard against intermittent dissensions. . .Those who dwell there in the (mountains) difficult of access should be punished, even if they give no offence; because, sheltered by their fastnesses, they are difficult to break up if they have (once) accumulated wealth. Every care should be taken that there should not be left with the villagers more food supply than required for one year's consumption, nor more oxen than wanted for (the tillage of) their fields. Because if they should keep more wealth, they would become in a single year very formidable Ḍāmaras and strong enough to neglect the commands of the king. When once the villagers obtain clothes, women, woollen blankets, food, ornaments, horses, houses, such as are fit for the town; when the kings in their madness neglect the strong places which ought to be guarded; when their servants show want of discrimination; when the keep of the troops is raised from a single district; when the officials are closely drawn together by bonds of intermarriage; when the kings look into their own affairs as if they were clerks (*kāyastha*),—then a change for the worse in the subjects' fortune may be known for certain." (4.345-352).

The essential question is : were the Ḍāmaras feudal lords ? Did they hold land as feudal property ? The answer is fairly clear, in the affirmative. We must remember that rebellion at that time meant refusal to pay dues. Town merchants existed with great wealth but without armed forces they were never regarded as rivals to the king's power. King Durlabhaka-Pratāpāditya II fell in love with a very rich foreign (Punjabi) merchant's wife, who was ceded to him willingly by the husband (4.17-38) to become the chief queen Narendraprabhā. The Ḍāmaras were armed, owned villages, had their own fortified strongholds (7.1171-3, 1266-7). Such an establishment could not be maintained without collecting some dues from the villagers; there would have been no conflict with the centre if a reasonable share had been passed on. But a powerful Ḍāmara like Dhanva (5.48-58) could usurp villages granted to the leading temple of Śiva Bhūteśa. The later books of the *Rājataraṅgiṇī* are filled with details of the struggles, not only between the king and Ḍāmaras but between factions of Ḍāmaras, some of which might side with the king or set up their own king. To disarm villagers completely was out of the question in Kashmir, for hunting was always a useful supplement to farming, while the central power could not move rapidly enough to protect distant places against tribal or robber attack. Given a certain access of wealth, Ḍāmara power followed inevitably as the kings were never rich enough to maintain regularly paid, and regularly supplied, strong local garrisons.

Kalhaṇa reports that contemporary Ḍāmaras about Śrīnagar were "more like cultivators though they carry arms" (8.709). Thus the Ḍāmaras maintained a class privilege[4] above the ordinary cultivator, that of bearing arms. In 7.494-5, we are told of one Jayyaka, "who was the clever son of a householder at Selyapura, called Mayana, had gradually attained the position of a Ḍāmara (*kramād ḍāmaratvan agāt*). By the revenue of his land, and by selling victuals as a trader to far-off regions, this greedy person accumulated wealth and became in the course of time a rival to the lord of wealth (Kubera)". This shows how a trading householder could become a Ḍāmara which thus denotes a status, not a caste. The confiscation of Jayyaka's wealth by king Kalaśa (7 499) solved the king's financial problems for life, but also converted that king into a very shrewd businessman (7.507-514), looking very profitably after his own trade and investments. For the position of trade and the traders in this connection, 4.712 tells us : "Nara and other merchants who were in possession of spotless horses and owned villages, ruled Ḍārvābhisāra and the neighbouring regions, setting up (their own) thrones (in the early 9th century)". Under Pārtha (A.D. 906-921), "the king's ministers and the Tantrins (Pretorians) became wealthy, as they amassed riches by selling stores of rice at a high price (in times of famine)" (5.274). This proves that land was effectively in private ownership to a considerable extent, and that surplus could be traded either against imported goods, or held over for internal trade in t mes of famine, to increase accumulation of wealth. Combined with the right to bear arms exercised by all castes in Kashmir (even Caṇḍālas were armed as village, palace, and camp watchmen) this gives us the complete genesis of the Ḍāmaras, remembering that with an individual, his immediate relatives also became Ḍāmaras.

The low prices for grain would by themselves be of great help in forming accumulation in times of plenty. The Kashmirian *dīnnāra* was 3.64 grains of copper (Stein II. p. 315 seq.). Food prices in Kashmir rose (Stein II. p. 325) in famine times under Harṣa (1089-1101 A.D.) only to 500 *dīnnāras* per *khārī* (177 lbs.) of rice. The normal price under Zainu-l'ābidin (A.D. 1420-70) was 300, in times of famine 1500 *dīnnāras* per *khārī*. Under Akbar, the normal price had risen to 2900 *dīnnāras* per *khārī*, as the result of incorporation into the Mughal empire. So Suyya's vast reclamation and irrigation works increased the population and the number of villages, but left Kashmir with an increasingly difficult situation as regards payments against imports; a few people managed to control the surplus for sale outside. It also complicated the administrative problem for the kings, as started earlier. We may note that with the progress of Muslim trade, saffron was imported more and more into India from the Levant and other countries, by sea.

One feature of feudalism, the corvée, appears under a peculiar form in Kashmir because of local conditions. Transport was unusually difficult, road-building very costly, maintenance almost impossible. Morever, assessment, payment of dues, and even of salaries was generally in terms of grain, as it continued to be till the Settlement of the late 19th century. Thus regular porterage was essential to maintain supplies for the central power. The transport as required service (*rūḍha-bhāroḍhi*) must have existed from much older times, but king Śaṃkaravarman (A.D. 883-902) is credited with organizing and enforcing it (5.172-174) on a strict, regular basis. The purely local Ḍāmaras might be counterbalanced by court *sāmantas*, and Ṭhakkuras with undefined powers and holdings. But this ultimately increased the number of feudal lords while the Ḍāmaras who sided with the successful king (e.g. Cakravarman, A.D. 936; 5-306-340) in a given struggle certainly could not be reduced in power, wealth, or privilege for their help.

4. Iconoclasm without theology. The breaking of images and violation of temple property appears in Kashmir for what it actually was, the expropriation of accumulated wealth by the central power to pay for its expenses in the struggle against local chiefs. Even under Jayāpīḍa (8th century), such measures had been taken, in spite of the king's having a copper mine (4.617) at his disposal. He had a costly army and costlier tastes inherited from his illustrious predecessor Lalitāditya. His *kāyasthas* pointed out to him the greater profits to be extracted from his own kingdom, without the risk and hardships of a foreign expedition (4.621); the advice was willingly accepted, with great profit to the king but far greater to the revenue officials (4.622). He began by taking the whole harvest, including the cultivator's share, for three years (4.623), which not only betokens cruelty and greed but proves desperate circumstances for the autocrat. "With his mind merged in greed, the king took for friends the officials (*kāyasthas*) who carried off all property (of the subjects), while delivering only the smallest fraction of what they realized." Even making all due allowance for the brāhmaṇa Kalhaṇa's dislike of the kāyastha officials, this shows the failure of the only alternative to feudalism, namely honest and efficient central administration. Thereafter, Jayāpīḍa rapidly took over brāhmaṇa *agrahāra* lands, desisting only when many of the priests died (apparently by fasting to death) while great numbers emigrated

(4.631-3; 638-9); none of the rescinded lands were returned. King Śaṃkaravarman (883-902 A.D.) established two new taxes, one on markets (*aṭṭapatibhāga*), the other on domestic affairs (*gṛhakṛtya*) but these did not suffice (5.167). "He took from the temples the profits arising from the sale of incense, sandalwood, and other (articles of worship) under the pretext that they were the (king's legal) share of the selling price. Then again he plundered straightway 64 temples, through special officers (placed over them) under the pretext of (exercising) supervision. The king resumed villages which belonged to the temples, against a compensatory assignment (*pratikara*), and (then) cultivated the land himself as (if he were) an agriculturist" (5.168-170). The king reduced weights but charged full weights for the enforced porterage corvée which he first organized, and levied even from temples. As temple lands were granted free of taxes, dues, and supervision, these measures helped convert them into feudal holdings. Special dues were levied in good feudal style for the payment of village officials (*skandakas*, *grāmokāyasthas*), while the regulation of weight by the *gṛhakṛtya* office was another source of additional revenue (5.171-176). This meant changing the old official set-up, with the appointment of five secretaries (*divira*) with a special treasurer (*gañjavara*; 5.177). The words are supposed to be of Persian origin and may indicate some foreign inspiration.

At least, Śaṃkaravarman granted some compensation for resumed temple lands, thus recognizing property rights in land. The logical culmination of this confiscatory scheme came under Harṣa (1089-1101 A.D.) who fought, but ultimately lost, a war of extermination against the Ḍāmaras. He began by a fortuitous confiscation of treasures belonging to the deserted Bhīmakeśava temple founded (near Mārtāṇḍa) by Bhīma Śāhī; while the priests were quarrelling among themselves, the idol's silver armour had been stolen from the locked temple. However, the members of the *purohita pārṣadya* fasted till the king exempted them from the 'forced carrying of loads (*rūḍhabhāroḍhi* corvée)' in compensation (7.1080-1088). Thereafter, king Harṣa resorted to direct action against the other temples, "as he was addicted to extravagant expenditure upon various corps of his army" (7.1089). "Then the greedy-minded (king) plundered from all temples their wonderful treasures which former kings had bestowed there. In order to get hold of the statues of gods, too, when the treasure (of the temples) had been carried off, he appointed Udayarāja 'prefect for the overthrow of divine images (*devotpātana-nāyaka*).' In order to defile the statues of gods, he had excrement and urine poured over their faces by naked mendicants whose noses, feet, and hands had rotted away (? lepers)'' (7.1090-1092). "There was not one temple in a village, town, or in the City which was not despoiled of its images by that *Turuṣka*, king Harṣa. Only two chief divine images were respected by him, the illustrious Raṇasvāmin in the City and Mārtāṇḍa (among the images) in townships. Among colossal images, two statues of Buddha were saved..." (7.1095-8). Yet the king was not a convert to Islam, like some of his foreign mercenaries, the term *turuṣka* being applied to him here only in hatred : "While continually supporting the *Turuṣka* captains of hundreds with money, this perverse-minded (king) ate domesticated pigs until his death" (7.1149). His ideas on incest agreed with those of Caligula (7.1147-8), but unlike the Roman emperor Harṣa claimed no divinity for himself. The confiscation of sacred property was one of many (7.1100-1107) straightforward fiscal measures under the *arthanāyaka*, unconnected with any theological persecution of the brāhmaṇas, change of religion, or establishment of new cults. The king was a man of great culture, poet, composer, patron of learning (7.933-44).

The Mohammedan conquest of Kashmir took place, virtually without striking a blow, in A.D. 1339 when the condottiere Shah Mir deposed queen Koṭā (widow of the last Hindu ruler) to found his own dynasty. Islam made its way into Kashmir by gradual conversion, being quite peacefully adopted by the great majority during the latter half of the 14th century, without the accompaniment of catastrophic upheavals; the ground had long been prepared by the influx of foreign adventurers in royal service. The traditional brāhmaṇa officials continued in office, many as landlords; Sanskrit remained in use for administration, and is found even on Mohammedan gravestones (Stein I. p. 131, footnote); the *Lokaprakāśa* shows an administrative jargon compounded from Sanskrit, with Arabic and Persian words (e.g. *suratrāṇa* and *surasthāna* for sultan) in use for land-grants, *huṇḍikā* scrips etc., as late as the time of Shah Jehan. Of the Muslim rulers, only one tried idol smashing; his successor Zainu-l-ābidin (1420-1470) not only patronized Sanskritists and brāhmaṇas, but went on some of the traditional Hindu pilgrimages. The final conquest under Akbar consummated the trend, leaving Kashmir a beautiful poverty-stricken appendage of India, with vast undeveloped resources in mineral wealth and hydro-power, increasingly severe famines, steadily dwindling population. The real struggle had been fought out centuries earlier between king and Ḍāmaras.

The importance of Kashmir to the historian lies in that it shows the true motive force of Indian feudalism, the need to increase commodity production by local concentration of surplus, whose extraction was heightened by force in the hands of the nobles.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1] The main source is M.A. Stein's translation "Kalhaṇa's *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, a chronicle of the kings of Kaśmīr" (London 1900), to which all otherwise unspecified numbers in brackets refer, by book and verse. "Stein" refers to the able translator's most useful notes. The author was the son of Caṇpaka, a hereditary brāhmaṇa court official writing under king Jayasimha (A.D. 1128-1149); the earlier part is legendary, but the legends are not pure myth, being associated with place-names. The edition of the text by Durgāprasād (2 vols., Bombay 1892, 1894) was used but not directly cited. A. Weber's valuable study, with long excerpts, of the *Lokaprakāśa* (*Indische Studien* xviii, 1898, 289-412) adds very little that might be of use here, particularly as that text needs critical edition; at least, the two MSS I have seen, namely 336 and 339 of 1875-6 in the Bombay Govt. Collection at the BORI, Poona, differ too much in detail in the only common portion (the first section, as from an unspecified Kṣemendra's *Kathāsaritsāgara*, being all we find in the former MS; even the second codex, in Sāradā script, is too incorrect). Whether words like *gañja* and *divira* are loan words from Persian or ghost-words needs more investigation, though the former view seems the more probable. The *Nīlamata-purāṇa*, edited by K. de Vreese (Leiden, 1936), seems to contain nothing relevant beyond the information given by Stein in his footnotes.

[2] B. Laufer: *Sino-Iranica* (Chicago 1919) pp. 309-323: particularly p. 317. See also Stein II. p. 428; W. R. Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir* (Oxford, 1895), pp. 342-4.

[3] J. Ph. Vogel, *Antiquities of Chamba State* (Archaeological Survey of India, New Imperial Series, 36, Calcutta, 1911); cf. also *IA*, xvii (1888), 7-13.

[4] There seems to have been a special type of hair-dressing characteristic of the Ḍāmaras, though the reference does not make it clear whether it was as feudal barons or as Lavanyas that the hair was piled up. "While he (king Harṣa) was killing the Lavaṇyas, he left in Maḍavarājya not even a Brahman alive if he wore his hair dressed high and was of prominent appearance" (7.1229). The *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* of Vidyākara, stanza 817 (by Viddūka) describes the owl peeking out of his trunk-hollow at evening as *ḍamarita-śiras*, and this may be connected with the *ḍāmara* hairdress.

6

AMALENDU GUHA

Tribalism to Feudalism in Assam: 1600-1750

Early State Formation

The Assamese society,* though a segment of the Indian society at large, exhibited in course of its evolution several distinctive features not shared by the latter. The multi-caste village community, based on *jajmānī* relations, was unknown to

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*The geographical coverage of this society comprises all the 10 districts of the present state of Assam (78,842 sq. kms.) as well as Goalpara, Mikir Hills, North Cachar Hills and Cachar. This was precisely the area covered by Koch-Hajo, the Ahom and Kachari kingdoms in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. From 1526 onwards the Kachari kingdom was claimed to be a vassal state "established and protected" (*thāpita-sancita*) by the Ahoms and was invaded from time to time whenever the latter asserted independence. Koch-Hajo, annexed by the Mughals around 1612, frequently changed hands during the period of intermittent Mughal-Ahom conflicts for 68 years, from 1614 to 1682. In the latter year, except for Goalpara district, the whole of Koch-Hajo finally came under the Ahoms. The British became masters of Goalpara in 1765 and of the rest of Assam after 1824.

The population of Assam, as defined above, was three millions or so in the first half of the 18th century, but gradually came down to some 1.1 millions in the critical decade of 1821-30 according to our estimates. It was only 2.1 millions at the census of 1872.

Assam. There was no urbanization at all. The number of specialized castes remained extremely limited and the division of labour minimal. Weaving of cloth for exchange was generally carried on in all households by women irrespective of their caste status. The revenue system was based on a corvée payable to the state. Besides, the use of slaves and serfs in agriculture was of more than marginal importance. All these distinctive features indicate the continued, inhibiting influence of tribalism on the evolution of the medieval Assamese society.

Several tribal state formations alongside a fragmented political system known as the *bhuiyan-rāj* flourished during the 13th-16th centuries. The term *bhuiyan* or *bhomik* is etymologically derived from *bhumiyo* or *bhumi* meaning land and signified a land-owner or land-controller. A caste-differentiated Assamese-speaking people under the Bhuiyans formed the core of society and coexisted with numerous tribal settlements representing diverse languages and uneven levels of cultural development.

The Bhuiyans often grouped themselves together locality-wise either under the hegemony of an overlord (*bar-rājā*) or formed a confederacy (*bar-bhuiyan*) headed by a chief (*shiron ani*) Bhuiyan. Petty kings craved for the title of "Kāmeśvara" (Lord of Kāmarūpa) and still more for the title of "panca-Gauḍeśvara" (lord of the five Gauḍas). When such a claimant was strong enough, the neighbouring Bhuiyans recognized him as their liege-lord and paid personal homage at his court. Otherwise, they remained independent. Most of the Bhuiyans were kāyastha by caste; others belonged to the brāhmaṇa Daivajna and Kalita (a dominant peasant caste) castes. Some were of local royal descent; others, particularly the Kāyasthas, were often migrant-adventurers from north India. Various surnames used by them such as *bhuiyan*, *giri*, *ray*, *dalai* (*dalopati*) and *khan* suggest that they were a class of estate-holders at the village level. They based their claims on erstwhile royal grants of land along with serfs and/or on their own armed prowess which was needed to protect the villages from frequent tribal incursions.[2]

Thus the Bhuiyans, big and small, appear to have constituted a squirearchy which wielded hereditary political and economic power at the intermediate and grass-root levels. Apparently the hierarchy of the power-structure was at times vertically quite deep in the following order:

> *panca-gauḍeśvara* (Lord of five Gauḍas)
> *kāmeśvara* (Lord of Kāmrūpa)
> *bar-rājā* or *chhotā-rājā*
> *bar-bhuiyan* or *shiromani bhuiyan* (*mahāgrāmeśvara*)
> *saru* (minor) *bhuiyan* or *grāmeśvara* (lord of the village)
> *pāik* (free peasantry) and *bandī-beti/bahatiyā* (slaves/serfs)

Even after their suppression by the expanding Koch and Ahom states the Bhuiyans did not lose their local influence completely and were absorbed into the lower echelons of the new machinery set up for corvée collection (in the capacity of *kakati*, *gomostha*, *thakuria*, *bara* and *barua*), for they constituted the traditional elite having a formal education in arithmetic, the use of arms and scriptures (*ankat*, *shāstraī*, *shāstrat pārgat*). The syllabus of this formal education generally included lessons on *vyākarana*, *bhārata*, *purāna*, *bhāgavata*, *nyāya*, *tarka* and *kāyasthika* or *kaitheli vidyā* (i.e., arithmetic and mensuration). Shankardev (14 9-1468) and Madhadev (1489-1526), both Vaiṣṇava preceptors of Kāyastha and Bhuiyan descent, had this kind of education. So had Shankardev's son.[3]

The Bhuiyans in their heyday were mostly followers of the Śakti cult. Together with Śaivism and secretly practised tāntric-Buddhist magic cults, it dominated the Assamese religious sphere.[4] The heterogeneous local tribal deities, mother-goddess cults and fertility rites were absorbed in the growing Hindu pantheon. The fragmented semi-tribal political system and embryonic feudal relations within a tribe were projected in the religious thought of Assam. Thus the cult of the Ahoms, the Tai peasant community which had migrated into Assam in the 13th century, integrated existing lord-vassal relations among them with heaven and earth, spirits and ancestors.[5]

The rudimentary Ahom state had at its base many agricultural village (*bān*) settlements, each made up of a certain number of big or small families belonging to different family-groups (*foid*). Each such settlement had a well-defined territory including wet rice-fields, waste lands, forest tracts and house sites. Several such settlements together formed an intermediate administrative unit or domain with one of the village settlements as the head-quarters (*che*) of the noblemen governing it. At the apex of the several domains was the king who appointed the nobles to their respective offices and could dismiss them when necessary. The king could himself be removed by the Council of great nobles. The decentralized nature of the early Ahom state apparatus was reflected in the Tai term for political rule: *kin mung kin bān mung*, i.e., "to eat country, to eat village". By the term was meant either the kingdom as a whole or any of its constituent chiefs' domains. It originally signified a chief's village/town governing the surrounding territory. At the *bān* level all wet rice-lands were communal property, but were separately cultivated by family units. The holders of wet rice-lands had to render service to the community, which in practice meant to its nobles holding office at the state and village levels for purposes of defence and public works. During the 13th-15th centuries there was a complete absence of minted money and the extent of trade was negligible. Thus the state organization had a peculiar quasi-feudalistic structure. Neo-Vaiṣṇavism with its emphasis on a monistic world view, pacifism and equality of all before God could not easily penetrate such a fragmented society until a basis was created for its further consolidation.

Growth of the Ahom State and Its Feudalization

If the 16th century, dominated by the expanding Koch kingdom, was a formative period for the Assamese society, the next one century and a half was the period of its steady consolidation under the Ahoms. The extension of plough at the cost of hoe cultivation and of wet at the expense of dry rice-lands alongside a general agricultural expansion—a process that was going on for some time in Upper Assam—led to a rapid increase in the surplus produced. The consequent rise in population provided the Ahoms with the material base for their further economic and political expansion. Fire-arms, introduced first in the 1530s, were increasingly put to use and, by the 1660s, excellent gunpowder, matchlocks and cannon were manufactured locally. Coins were for the first time struck by the Ahom, Koch and Kachari kings during the years 1543-1600, though on an extremely modest scale. Thus the earliest Ahom coins bear a date equivalent to A.D. 1543, but more than a century passed before another batch of them were struck. The continued use of cowries and Mughal coins was supplemented from the mid-17th century onwards by frequent local minting. This indicated a slow growth of the market in Upper Assam. In 1662 there was only one narrow bazar road in the Ahom capital and the only traders in that bazar were the betel-leaf sellers. "It was not the practice", reported Shihabuddin Talish, "to buy and sell food in the market-place. The inhabitants store in their houses one year's supply of food of all kinds and are under no necessity to buy or sell any eatable".[6] However, by 1739 we find prices of various foodstuff being quoted in a copperplate grant. This suggests a change in the situation, which is corroborated by the fact that the Ahom mint was constantly at work and silver coins of smaller denomination were being increasingly issued from the close of the 17th century.[7]

During the 17th century some new crops such as tobacco and pineapples[8] and new crafts such as brass metal casting were introduced. To meet the needs of the expanding population salt and saltpetre had to be increasingly imported from Mughal India mainly against the export of forest products, mustard-seeds, inferior gold extracted from sand-washing and muga silk. Surplus rice, dried fish and handloom manufactures of the plains were received in exchange for raw cotton, lump iron, rock-salt and forest products from the surrounding hills. Traders of Lower Assam carried on trade by river within and beyond Assam on a modest scale during the 16th-17th centuries.

The basic structure of the Ahom state was undergoing slow changes towards a centralization of the corvée and political authority. The man-power available for rendering service was of two broad categories: (i) *chamūa pāik*, i.e., those liable to render non-manual service or allowed to contribute a share of their produce in lieu thereof and (ii) *kānri pāik*, i.e., those liable to render manual service as ordinary soldiers and labourers. Both categories were grouped in manageable divisions (*dāg*) village-wise and/or function-wise according to convenience.

The *pāiks* came in rotation for active service in their respective units.[9] Three or four of them, all presumably belonging to an extended family or a common neighbourhood, were expected to complete between them a man-year of unpaid service. This is evident from the fact that a man-power census was taken in 1510 and that the royal demand for corvée during Suklenmung's reign (1539-52) was set at "one man for every four (*e-poā*) per household". However, the system had its loose ends. "Some Ahoms complied with, some did not. Only the conquered subjects", a chronicler commented, "perform whatever work is given to them".[10] Obviously the rudimentary state as an organ of coercion vis-a-vis the dominant tribe was underdeveloped in the 16th century.

The militia or the man-power pool was made up of all adult males, Ahoms as well as non-Ahoms, in the 15-60 age-group with the exception of the nobility, priests, slaves and attached serfs. The tribal hoe-cultivators of frontier tracts were also generally excluded. The militia constituted the army in times of war. In times of peace it was engaged in various public works such as dam-building, land-reclamation and water control; it was customarily made available to the royal family and the office-holding nobility for private work on their big farms. Those *kānri pāiks* whose unpaid service was thus allotted to the office-holders—the latter received no salaries—were called *likchou* (personal retainers).

Every household customarily possessed three types of land: (i) a homestead plot surrounded by a garden and bamboo groves, held as private property; (ii) dry crop lands reclaimed at private initiative, also held as private property and (iii) a portion of the communally-held wet rice-lands, subject to redistribution from time to time. Besides, common lands such as forests and marshes within the *bān* were jointly shared. The possession of the third category of land alone was linked to the *pāik* service to the community. Evidently wet rice-lands were distributed after providing for the private démesnes of the chiefs, as was the medieval Tai practice in Vietnam.[11] The distribution of this residue was egalitarian in the sense that the same amount of wet rice-lands was given to each adult male, i.e., *pāik*, as is evident from later practice on record.

The militia attached to the king, members of his family and other chiefs continued to be loosely organized till about the end of the 16th century. An individual derived his right to land not from the king representing the superimposed state, but presumably from his immediate village community (*bān*) headed by a chief. His service obligation to the state, therefore, was a transferred obligation which he originally owed to his *bān*. As such, the *bān* still acted as some sort of a restraint on the centralized authority. This is evident from a couple of recorded cases. In the mid-16th century an Ahom householder was able to resist successfully royal encroachment on his land even for such a purpose as the founding of a capital city.[12] About a hundred years thereafter king Pratap Singh (1603-41), who had a few paternal fields in village Revati, had to conciliate the Ahom villagers with a feast and gifts of clothes to get additional lands for further extension of his farm there.[13]

It was the sudden political expansion of the Ahoms into the relatively more advanced areas of Koch-Hajo as well as a demographic expansion that hastened certain significant reforms during the first half of the 17th century to strengthen the state apparatus. A fresh man-power census was undertaken, several new administrative-military offices were created and the militia was reorganized into well-knit divisions of six thousand persons each, now called *khels*. Many functional *khels* were also created. These were sub-divided into units of thousand, hundred and 20. The *khel* system was a remodelling of what existed rather than an innovation. The registered *pāik's* customary right to hold a piece of wet rice-land was now strictly limited to a prescribed norm of 2.66 acres per *pāik*. His obligatory state service was fixed at three or four months in rotation. He could enjoy his allotment (*gā-māti*/body-land) as before, free of any other taxes. But for wet lands over and above this norm he had to pay now a tax probably in kind (*pālpasā*). To measure land for this purpose a standard measuring rod was introduced for the first time.[14] Thorough land surveys, as in Mughal India, were undertaken in the 1680s and were completed for the whole state by 1751. A number of skilled surveyors from Bengal migrated to Assam and settled in service there during these years.

The *khel*-wise organization of the people coexisted with the parallel village organization. Thus around 1830 Darrang had

147 villages organized into 39 *khels* and Nadur had 123 villages organized into 45 *khels*.[15] Villages in Assam, however, were not nucleated; they were generally hamlet-type linear settlements along river banks. The imposition of a limit to a *pā'k's* tax-free holding of wet rice-lands suggests that the old villages were already facing the problem of scarcity of land owing to overcrowding and that the state was facing a growing need of resources in forms other than labour-rent. This is also indicated by the introduction of a small toll (*kātal*) on fisheries, muga silk farms, markets and fairs, ferries and frontier customs barriers (*phāt*) early in the 17th century.[16] The surplus population, once identified, was redistributed in a planned manner. Individuals were separated from their respective households in old villages and settled in colonies in desolate areas. This helped to break up the clans and broaden the social and territorial base of the Ahom state. Attempts were made on the model of multi-caste villages in Mughal India to settle in every new village at least two households each from as many as 14 castes or so. Some of these castes were functional, for example, the Muslim braziers (*maria*).[17] The village pattern surviving in Upper Assam until the early years of British rule suggests that these attempts were infructuous or received a setback by the Burmese practice of carrying off artisans in particular as slaves during the short period of their occupation (1817-25).

The gradation of militia officers in terms of hundred and thousand was influenced according to some scholars by the Mughal system. The Assamese term *khel* for a division (or a clan in a different context) is obviously derived from the Arabic-Persian term *kheil*, meaning a cavalry division or a tribal clan. However, the centurion system appears to have had its roots in the traditional Tai military organization, as similar principles of organization prevailed in medieval Thailand as well.[18] The aforesaid reforms were an attempt on the part of the Ahom monarchy to strengthen itself by transforming the nobility (feudality) into a military-administrative service whose personal bond with the *pāiks* had been disrupted. By putting the *pāik* in an extra-territorial *khel* and providing for inter-*khel* transfers the king could now abridge his nobles' power over a cohesive geographical unit like the *bān* and the bond between the king and the *pāiks* could be correspondingly strengthened.

Simultaneously the Mughal part of Koch-Hajo was divided after 1637 into a number of parganas and subjected to a land-tax preferably payable in cash, as in the rest of Mughal India. This was retained later under the Ahoms with only slight modifications. The land allotment per *pāik* was slightly higher, and the assessed pecuniary tax was generally retained in lieu of personal service.

The society that was being integrated by the twin processes of (i) the neo-Vaiṣṇavite movement from below and (ii) the political unification from above continued to be feudal in its essence, both in its political and manorial aspects. The element of political feudality was only marginally undermined by the aforesaid reforms, which were more anti-tribal than anti-feudal in their nature. In fact, during the same period half a dozen or so of border tribal states with hereditary rājās besides Darrang and Kachari kingdoms were stabilized as vassals (*thāpita-sancita*) vis-a-vis the Ahom states, their patron. As to the manorial aspect, the priests of temples together with the nobles including the king constituted the dominant class. They had their tax-free private agricultural farms (comparable to lord's démesne) which were cultivated by their own slaves and attached serfs settled thereupon. These slaves and attached serfs were not numerous and together accounted for hardly 10 per cent—perhaps much less— of the total population. Another estimated 25 to 30 per cent of the entire *kānri pāik* labour force (i.e., of the free peasantry) was allotted as *likchou* (personal attendants) by the state to the office-holding nobles[19] These too were a special category of collectivized quasi-serfs enjoined to work on the big private farms. They directly worked for the parasitic class to provide them with a surplus and together with slaves and attached serfs formed about one-third of the population. Apparently the *likchous* were treated worse than the slaves, for whereas the master had to feed the slaves and was materially affected if the latter died or ran away, the self-maintained *likchou* involved no such investment by the master and was only temporarily assigned to him during the tenure of his office. The *likchou* was, therefore, liable to unbridled exploitation subject to only customary checks.

We propose to examine the extent to which the neo-Vaiṣṇavite movement accorded with this type of class society which successfully maintained its integrity and stability until the mid-18th century and the social changes brought about their mutual interaction.

Hinduization and Detribalization

The earlier state formations depended on kinship and feudal ties, but with the rising authority of the monarch there began a search for a universal religion to teach the people to be obedient, patient and submissive. The Koch monarchy initiated the process which was continued by the 17th-century Ahom kings and still later by the Kachari kings. Pratap Singh found it prudent to patronize Śaivism without relinquishing his Tai-Ahom faith. He also revived the old practice of making *brahmottara*, *devottara* and *dharmotta-a* land grants to brāhmaṇas and temples. For the first time he engaged learned brāhmaṇas in place of the Ahoms for diplomatic missions abroad on the ground that the former were more shrewd. However, all these changes only indicated the groping for a proper religious policy to find stable allies from amongst the non-Ahoms. During Pratap Singh's reign the *mahāpuruśiā* sect of neo-Vaiṣṇavism was subjected to much persecution and several of their *gosāins* or high priests, among them Mukunda Gosain, were put to death.[20] This kind of royal oppression of neo-Vaiṣṇavite groups took place from time to time for a century longer.

For the greater part of the hundred years ending 1750, excepting the last half of Gadadhar Singh's reign (1681-96), the Ahom kings generally showed due respect and courtesy to the neo-Vaiṣṇavite *gosāins* and made grants and endowments for the maintenance of their monasteries. Several important *satras* were also set up under their patronage.[21] Having lost much of its earlier idealism, the neo-Vaiṣṇavite movement had already split into a number of distinct sects. For all of them *saran* had become a stereotyped ceremony symbolizing the *bhakat's* (devotee's) total submission to his *guru* (teacher). The *bhakat* had to seek spiritual protection of the *guru* by prostrating himself before the latter. Clearly the feudal model of a personal bond between a patron and his client had affected the principles of the *satra* organization. Irrespective of sects, all the tithe-collecting *satras* also invariably hankered after power and grants of estates and serfs. They could, however, be placed under two broad categories which we shall for convenience call the left and right wings. Issues such as idol-worship, observance of brāhmaṇical rites, celibacy as a necessary condition for monkhood and especially the propriety of the initiation of a brāhmaṇa by a śūdra divided them.

Left-wing *satras* had generally śūdra *gosāins*. Like the founders of the movement, they invariably believed that there was nothing wrong in a brāhmaṇa being spiritually initiated by a śūdra. Naturally, they gained a strong foothold amongst the despised castes as well as the tribal neophytes. Consistently opposed to the left-wing trends, the Ahom court pursued over the years a "divide and rule" policy, discouraging the nonconformist and encouraging the conformist *satras*. Most brutal persecution was carried on during the last five years of Gadadhar's reign. However, after his death the policy was reversed by his son, Rudra Singh. A conference of Vaiṣṇava *gosāins* of all sects was convened by him in his capital in 1702 for a debate on the controversial religious issues. The outcome of this conference was a royal decree forbidding śūdras from initiating the brāhmaṇas. Exemplary punishments followed any violation of the ban. The head of a certain *satra* was punished even for discarding idol-worship. At the same time official patronage was extended to all conformist *satras* headed by the brāhmaṇas. Selected *gosāins* were given the privilege of blessing the Ahom kings at their coronation and as many as 1,230 big and small *satras* received recognition from the state. All this happened during the reign of Rudra Singh (1696-1714), not himself a Vaiṣṇava by faith.[22]

After a long period of hesitation Rudra Singh finally decided in 1714 to throw his weight in favour of the Śakti cult as the most suitable faith for a reigning king and the ruling class. A stable alliance had meanwhile been forged between the monarchy and the right-wing of neo-Vaiṣṇavites. Thus from the beginning of the 18th century—more than six decades after the first adoption of Hinduism by one of them—the Ahom kings became staunch Hindus. Instead of burying their dead, they now began to cremate them in Hindu fashion. Pile-houses on raised platforms began to give way to mud-plinth houses. The Ahom language was almost completely replaced by Assamese at the court. The grant of land and serfs to brāhmaṇas, Hindu temples and even neo-Vaiṣṇavite *satras* increasingly became an extensive practice.

Two factors account for the earlier policy of all-out persecution during the few years immediately preceding Rudra Singh's reign. The *satras* had grown very rich and therefore the confiscation of their wealth including gold idols was held to be justified. Secondly, the country had become full of *gosāins* and *bhakats* who naturally claimed the traditional priestly privilege of exemption from the *kānri pāik* and *likchou* services, thus seriously inconveniencing the state.[23] Indeed, this second factor might have been the main motivation behind the neo-Vaiṣṇavite upsurge and hence provoked its persecution. The *satras* had become the refuge of those who wanted to escape the corvée. Gadadhar's selective and discriminating persecution during the years 1690-6 aimed at removing married, but not the celibate, *bhakats* (monks) from the *satras*. *Bhakats* belonging to the four highest castes—brāhmaṇa, Daivajna, Kāyastha and Kalita—were left unmolested, but those of the intermediate and low castes were hunted down, expropriated and made to interdine and eat forbidden food. Many of the *gosāins* were tortured, even killed; as for example, Baikunthanathdev (d. 1691) of the Moamaria (Mayamara) *satra*. The followers of neo-Vaiṣṇavism were forced to work for the construction of a 117-mile road which was named *dhodar ali*—"the road of the lazy".

However, despite such a savagely cruel persecution the *satras* could not be isolated from the people. As they could not be crushed, they had to be tamed. The persecution was stopped even before Gadadhar's death and a new policy cleverly formulated by his successor, Rudra Singh. Those *gosāins* who were brāhmaṇas were restored to their respective *satras* in full honour. Even the sūdra *gosāins* were allowed to go back to their vocations, but were now forced to wear a distinctive badge and abandon their brāhmaṇa *bhakats*. It was with this humiliation that Chaturbhujdev was installed as the head (1696-1748) of the Moamaria *satra*.

This "divide and rule" policy succeeded in rallying the forces of brāhmaṇism and right-wing neo-Vaiṣṇavism on the side of the Ahom court as against the left-wing *satras*. The latter sought refuge in remote tribal areas and amongst the lower castes as well as the poorer sections of the people. They continued to preach, often secretly, according to their faith and in another half century there appeared popular uprisings under a religious garb almost all over Assam. These developed into a prolonged civil war (1770-1810) in which the left-wing Moamaria *satra* played the most significant role.[24]

Conclusion

A process of Sanskritization and detribalization was going on during the century and a half under review. But as fresh batches of tribal peoples from the hills were continuously settling down in the valleys of Assam, the process was halting and never complete. Yet within the given situation of the hills-plains continuum the early semi-tribal semi-feudal state formations progressively acquired marked anti-tribal features.

The ruling tribal families adopted Hinduism, but unlike in mid-India did not attain or aspire for the kṣatriya or Rajput status despite validation through flattering and miraculous myths about their origin This had an important implication. No caste cleavage was driven between the commoners and their ruling hierarchy within the same tribe (this observation does not apply to certain Ahom clans of low origin who remained degraded). In spite of their prolonged political rule, the Ahom, Kachari and Koch tribes, on being admitted into the Hindu society as new castes, were given a status much inferior to that of the four high castes including the dominant peasant caste, Kalita. Though considerably Ahomized through intermarriages, the Chutiya tribe was also able to preserve its separate identity as a new Hindu caste of low status.

Koch was an omnibus caste which accommodated within itself tribal neophytes from different Tibeto-Burmese linguistic groups. A converted tribal of this group in Assam first became a Sarania and then developed into a Koch.[25] However, all Kochs of Goalpara, like those of north Bengal, who claimed descent from the original ruling tribe that had first adopted Hinduism, preferred to call themselves Rājbanśi in due course rather than Koch. They describe themselves as Rajbanśi kṣatriyas even now.

The Kalita caste tended to divide itself into several functional sub-castes—*bar-kalita* (agriculturist), *kumār-kalita* (potter), *māli-kalita* (gardener), *kamār-kalita* (blacksmith), *nāo-talia* (boat-maker), *tānti* (weaver), etc.,[26] but no fission actually took place. The possible role of neo-Vaiṣṇavism as a deterrent in this matter might be profitably investigated. Apparently the Daivajna caste during this period continuously improved its status under royal patronage and almost equalled the brāhmaṇas in prestige. This was because of the importance given to astrology practised by them and had no parallel elsewhere in India.

Muslim prisoners of wars and adventurers settled down in Assam in appreciable numbers during the period under review. They were, according to Talish (1662), "inclined more towards mingling with the Assamese than towards association with Muslims".[27] Aurangzeb granted revenue-free land in 1667 to Hindu temple priests in Koch-Hajo, while an Assamese king made a similar grant to a Muslim *faqir* later on.[28] The influence of Mughal India is seen in the introduction of such crafts as tailoring, brass metal casting and manufacture of perfume from roses. The initial resistance to the use of the Mughal-type sewn dress at the Ahom court was overcome by the end of the 17th century and the Assamese court dress closely followed the Mughal model. Two important functional *khels* of the Parsi-Parhias (Persian translators) and the Khanikars (artisans) were constituted of Muslims. Incidentally, the caste of Muslim braziers that emerged during this period was despised because of its occupation of liquor-brewing.

We also do not come across a developed trading and banker class as such. The contradiction between the estate-owning aristocracy and the free peasants (*pāiks*) with small holdings, who had to periodically suffer a quasi-serf (*likchou*) status ultimately found expression in a religious conflict. But there was much more to the struggle between the *satras* and the monarchy than this; it reflected the conflicts within the ruling class itself, the king, his nobles, temple priests, other privileged brāhmaṇas, erstwhile Bhuiyans and the newly-emerged *satras*, which called for a redistribution of the expanding economic surplus and political power. The method and agency for distributing increasing surplus and the fixation of relative shares of the religious and political functionaries were relevant and crucial issues in a period of all-round expansion.

The Ahom court did not make any land grants to the brāhmaṇas and their temples until the end of the 16th century, but this policy was reversed later and they received increasingly liberal grants of estates and serfs particularly in the 18th century. Among the beneficiaries were the newly-emerged *satras*.[29] Economically such grants facilitated colonization and extension of agriculture to waste lands. Politically they created new bases of support for the centralized authority. Influential *satras* and petty tribal chiefs were absorbed into the ruling class. Thus the estate-holding class was deliberately expanded.

Any commensurate expansion of the class of farm slaves and serfs was, however, not possible. Its main source of supply being the prisoners of war and the state being entirely dependent on the militia for self-preservation, too many serfs out of the free population could not be afforded. In fact, free *pāiks* and their male children were not allowed to be sold into slavery. Hence the slave-and-serf base of agriculture remained extremely narrow despite abundance of land. The servile class on the whole was treated well, at least better than *likchous*. Having no obligation to fight, its members had a secure life as well. On the other hand the free peasantry faced increasing insecurity on account of frequent wars and ruthless exploitation by the official aristocracy which was allowed to exact unpaid *likchou* service from them. Those from low castes suffered most. It appears that debt-slavery was also developing as an institution.[30]

Hence the neo-Vaiṣṇavite movement continued to have its appeal to the peasantry. It offered limited opportunities to them for an upward social mobility and imbued them with a sense of human dignity. Besides, by becoming *bhakats* they could vicariously challenge and even attempt to evade the obligation of manual service. These possibilities gave a militant turn to the movement in the second half of the 18th century.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1] The earliest of these, the Chutiya kingdom in the north-east corner of Assam, was absorbed by the Ahom state in 1523. The Koch state founded around 1515 was bifurcated into two states, Koch Bihar in north Bengal and Koch-Hajo in Assam, in 1581. The latter was absorbed by the Ahom state in the 17th century. Only the Kachari state, reduced to vassalage, continued to exist separately. All these states had expanded in their formative stage through the suppression of Bhuiyans.

[2] This account is based on details in E A. Gait, *History of Assam*, 3rd revised edn (Calcutta, 1967), pp. 39-46; M. Neog, *Shrishri Shankardev* (in Assamese, 3rd edn, Gauhati, 1958), pp. 10-6, 35-6, 55-6, 78-83, 91; Harakanta Barua, *Assam Buranji* (in Assamese, S K. Bhuyan ed, 2nd edn, Gauhati, 1962), p. 24. Also see my working paper "Feudalism in Early Medieval India: Some Comments" in the unpublished *Proceedings of the Seminar on Problems of Social and Economic History* (Advanced Centre of Medieval History, Aligarh Muslim University), 16-20 December 1968.

[3] Neog, op. cit. pp. 37-8, 87, 120. A variation of the course, as in the case of Shankardev, might have included the *Rāmāyaṇa Kāvya*, *śruti* and *smṛti* as well. Available dates of death for the Vaiṣṇava preceptors of Assam are reliable, but the same cannot be said of their dates of birth

[4] M. Neog, *Purani Ashamiyā Samāj āru Sanskriti* (in Assamese, Dibrugarh, 1957), pp. 19-31.

[5] For the Tai Religion see Dang Nghien Van, "An Outline of the Tai in Vietnam", *Vietnam Studies*, viii, no 32 (1972), 188-93; P.R.T. Gurdon, "A Short Note on the Ahoms" in J. Hastings, ed, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, i (1908), 235-6; G.G. Barua, ed. and tr., *Ahom Buranji* (Calcutta, 1930), pp. 1-23

[6] Talish cited by Gait, op. cit., p 153.

[7] Gait, op cit., p. 222 fn. There was a total absence of copper currency in Assam.

[8] Ibid. p.146; cf. S.K. Bhuyan, ed, *Deodhai Assam Buranji with Several Shorter Chronicles of Assam* (in Assamese, 2nd edn, Gauhati, 1962), p. 110.

[9] We find a similar system in medieval Siam (1350-1767). After the administrative reorganization in 1454 the whole population there was divided into civil and military groups. Each division called *lakh* was placed under a noble official and was sub-divided into groups: (i) *svay* or those exempted from personal service upon payment of tax and (ii) *prai* or those called up in rotation to serve as soldiers and labourers. In return for his personal services to his government a Thai freeman cherished his ancient right to as much land as he and his family could cultivate, Virginia Thompson, *Thailand the New Siam* (New York, 1941), pp. 292-3, 313, 541, 675. Cf. D.A. Graham, *Siam*, i (London, 1924), 235-6.

[10] Gait, op. cit, p 87; cf. S K Bhuyan, ed, *Satsari Assam Buranii* (in Assamese, 3rd edn, Gauhati University, 1969), p. 21. Quoted from the latter (translation ours).

[11] See D.N. Van, op. cit., pp. 171, 175.

[12] *Satsari Assam Buranji*, p. 20.

[13] "David Scott's historical notes about Assam" in *Col. White's Historical Miscellany*, ii (Transcript); xvi, no. 24 (Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Gauhati), Scott's notes are based on chromicles he consulted and compared in manuscript. The fields belonged to king Sukampha (1552-1603). Pratap Singh extended and consolidated them to found a big farm known as *jaykhamdang*. Also see *Assam Buranji*, pp. 30-40 The establishment of the farm in Revati village is referred to here, but not the incident.

[14] *Satsari Assam Buranji*, pp. 26-7, 76-7, 136; A Guha, "Ahom Migration: Its Impact on Rice Economy of Medieval Assam", *Artha Vijnana*, ix, no. 2 (June 1967), 151-2; *Assam Buranji*, pp. 56, 63,

[15] *Col. White's Historical Miscellany*, i, 12, 206.

[16] *Satsari Assam Buranji*, pp. 29, 138.

[17] Ibid. pp. 26, 77; *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, pp. 70, 130. The latter source refers to the drive for colonization and setting up of new villages even during the years following 1648. *Ahom Buranji*, p. iii, *Assam Buranji* pp. 44, 57, 63.

[18] Virginia Thompson, op. cit.

[19] In 1826 *likchous* constituted 29 per cent of the registered *pāiks* in Muttak (1,800 sq. miles) and 24 per cent in Sadiyakhowa territory, both offshoots of the Ahom state. This worked out from the two relevant documents, nos. lxvi and cxviii, in C.U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sunnads Relating to India's Neighbouring Countries*, i (Calcutta, 1876), 203, 300. During the early years of British rule, from 1825-6 to 1830-1, the dues of the officers in charge of *khels* in Assam were put at 27 per cent of the total revenue demand each year. This provides a basis for our estimate, Neufville to D. Scott, Foreign Political 10 June 1831, nos. 51-6 (National Archives of India). J P. Wade at the close of the 18th century found that everyone in the official hierarchy was entitled to the corvée of two out of every 20 *pāiks* in his jurisdiction. This was perhaps the maximum limit, see B. Sharma, ed, *J.P. Wade's Account of Assam* (compiled in 1792-1800, Sibsagar, 1927), pp. xv-xvi. According to another source, five to 10 per cent of the *pāiks* in an officer's jurisdiction were made available to him at his *likchous*, Haliram Dhekial Phukkan, *Assam Buranji* (in Bengali, 1829; J. Bhattacharya, ed, reprint, Gauhati, 1962), pp. 59-60. For the proportion of slaves/serfs to the population see A. Guha, "Land Rights and Social Classes in Medieval Assam", *IESHR*, iii, no. 3 (1966), 233-4.

[20] Gait, op. cit., p. 123; *Satsari Assam Buranji*, p. 75: *Assam Buranji*, pp. 63-4.

[21] Gait, op. cit. 289-90.

[22] S.K. Bhuyan, ed. *Tungkhungia Burani* (in Assamese, 2nd edn, Gauhati, 1964), pp. 30-1; Gait, op. cit., p. 290.

[23] Gait, op. cit., pp. 173-4, 288. *Satsari Assam Buranji*, pp. 117-8, 149; *Tungkhungia Buranji*, pp. 14, 26-7.

[24] A detailed discussion of this event is beyond the chronological limit of this paper. *Tungkhungia Buranji* is an important primary source in this

respect. In Assam, excluding Cachar and North Cachar Hills, 64 per cent of the Hindu population followed Vaiṣṇavism, 15 per cent Śāktism and less than two per cent Śaivism in 1901, *Census Report, Assam*, 1901, p. 42.

[25] For a discussion by E P. Stack of this process in the 19th century see *Census Report, Assam*, 1881, chapter VI, pp. 66, 74. Dhekial Phukkan, op. cit., p. 88. According to Capt. John Butler, the Mikirs also on their conversion entered the Koch caste, *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam* (London, 1854) p. 137.

[26] *Census Report, Assam*, 1901, p. 133. Dhekial Phukkan, op. cit., pp. 87-8.

[27] Gait, op. cit , p. 153.

[28] S.K. Bhuyan, ed, *Annals of the Delhi Badshahate* (Gauhati, 1947), pp. 15-8, 233. Lakshmi Singh's Copperplate grant of A D. 1783 and Aurangzeb's two Sanads of A D. 1667.

[29] For jealousy expressed by the Ahom princes at the wealth and power of the *satras* the *Tungkhungia Buranji*, pp. 14, 26-7; *Satsari Assam Buranji*, pp. 117-8.

[30] Needy peasants mortgaged their labour to well-to-do households against a loan. This system was quite prevalent in early 19th century and can be traced as far back as the early 17th century. The famous statesman, Momai Tamuli, was in the beginning of his career around 1603 a bonded labourer to his nephew, reportedly for a loan of four rupees only, see S.K. Bhuyan, *Lachit Barphukan and His Times* (Gauhati, 1947), p. 17.

Part Two

FEUDAL SOCIETY AND ECONOMY

7

R.S. SHARMA

How Feudal was Indian Feudalism

Several scholars have questioned the use of the term feudalism to characterize the early medieval socio-economic formation in India.[1] But the points raised by Harbans Mukhia[2] deserve serious attention. He rightly suggests that, unlike capitalism, feudalism is not a universal phenomenon. But in our view tribalism, stone age, metal age, advent of food producing economy are universal phenomena. They do indicate some laws conditioning the process and pattern of change.

Tribalism may continue or be followed by different forms of state and class society, but it appears universally. Tribal society has many variations. It can be connected with any of the modes of subsistence such as cattle pastoralism, other types of pastoralism, hoe agriculture, plough agriculture, etc. The advent of agriculture requires cooperation and settlement at one place, and creates a lasting base for the tribal set-up. Many tribal societies practise shifting cultivation or swidden cultivation. But an advanced type of agriculture produces substantial surplus and creates dents in tribal homogeneity. Conditions appear for the rise of classes based on status and wealth and above all on the large-scale exploitation of the bulk of the kinsmen by a

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few people on top. In such a situation the tribal system gets heavily corroded.

Similarly, although the tribal society is organized on the principle of kinship, this organization could have large variations. Some form of organization, inherited from the band society, would be developed further in the tribal stage. Cooperation in production efforts would be needed; division of labour would be required. But this could be on a matriarchal basis, patriarchal basis, on the basis of a combination of the two, and in fact could rest on an organization based on all kinds of kinship combinations and permutations. Marriage practices and laws of 'property' inheritance might differ from one tribal society to the other, and may differ even in the same tribe. But, in spite of these variations, tribal society has been found on a universal scale. Therefore the concept of tribe is useful even for the understanding of social formations known from written texts.

It is not necessary to posit diffusion of tribal society although this may have taken place in certain cases. Although feudalism does not seem to be as universal as tribalism, in the Old World it was undoubtedly more widespread than the slave system. The concept of peasant society is still in a nebulous state. But if peasant society means a system in which the orders of priests and warriors live on the surplus produced by peasants and augmented by the activities of the artisans, such a society existed in a good part of the Old World. Tribalism, peasant society or slave system could originate due to internal or external factors or due to both. Similarly it is not necessary to think in terms of the diffusion of the feudal system, although this happened in certain cases. For instance, the Norman feudalism in England was a result of the Norman conquest.

But just as there could be enormous variations in tribal society so also there could be enormous variations in the nature of feudal societies. It is rightly stated by Marx that feudalism "assumes different aspects, and runs through its various phases in different orders of succession."[3] But certain universals remain the same. This is admitted even by critics of Indian feudalism who think of the variants of feudalism.[4] Feudalism has to be seen as a mode of the distribution of the means of production and of the appropriation of the surplus. It may have certain broad universal features and it may have certain traits typical of a territory. Obviously land and agricultural products play a decisive role in pre-capitalist class societies, but the specific situation about land distribution and the appropriation of agricultural products will differ from region to region. It could be nobody's argument that what developed in pre-capitalist Western Europe was found in India and elsewhere. Historical laws, as far as they are known, do not work in this manner, nor could one say that feudalism was the monopoly of Western Europe. It is not possible to have any neat, cut and dried formula about feudalism. The utmost one could say about the universals of feudalism could be largely on the lines of Marc Bloch and E.A. Kosminsky.[5] Feudalism appears in a predominantly agrarian economy which is characterized by a class of landlords and a class of servile peasantry. In this system the landlords extract surplus through social, religious or political methods, which are called extra-economic. This seems to be more or less the current Marxist view of feudalism which considers serfdom, 'scalar property' and 'parcellised sovereignty' as features of the West European version of the feudal system. The lord-peasant relationship is the core of the matter, and the exploitation of the estate by its owner, controller, enjoyer or beneficiary as its essential ingredient. With these minimum universals, feudalism may have several variations. The particularities of the system in some West European countries do not apply to the various types of feudalism found in other areas. For example, evidence for peasant struggles against landlords in other countries has not been produced in sufficient degree. Similarly, artisan and capitalist growth within the womb of feudalism seems to be typical of the West European situation where agricultural growth and substantial commodity production created major structural contradictions. The nature of religious beneficiaries, who grabbed a major portion of land, also differed from country to country. Thus the Church was a great landlord in Portugal. Buddhist and Confucian establishments controlled land in Korea. Buddhist monasteries were also important in eastern India. Temples emerged as estates in south India, and many brāhmaṇas enjoyed a similar position in upper and middle Gangetic basins, central India, the Deccan, and Assam. Non-religious landed intermediaries also appear in different forms in different parts of India and outside this country.

In certain parts of the country, for example in Orissa, we find tribal chiefs being elevated to the position of landlords. In other parts many administrative officials enjoyed land taxes from the peasants. But in spite of all these variations the basic factor, namely, the presence of a controlling class of landlords and a subject peasantry, remains the same at least in early medieval times.

Again the degree of the servility of the peasants to the landlords might differ from region to region; so also the composition of the cultivating class. The development of agriculture, handicrafts, commodity production, trade and commerce and of urbanization could create conditions for differentiation in the ranks of the peasantry. Those peasants who produce a little over and above their needs of subsistence might buy their freedom by payment of money in lieu of labour service provided such a practice was favoured by the state and provided a reasonable extent of market economy was available. Several peasants might be reduced to a state of further penury and rich peasants might grow at their cost. But where such developments do not appear, a more or less homogeneous peasantry might continue. However, differences in the techniques of farming and the nature of the soil might affect the agricultural yield and create variations.

Similarly peasants might be compelled to work as serfs on landlords' farms in Western Europe. But serfdom should not be considered to be identical with feudalism.[6] It was after all a form of servility, which kept the peasant tied to the soil and made him work on the farm of his lord. Those peasants who were compelled to pay heavy rents in cash and kind to the landlords or required to provide both rent as well as labour were as servile as those who supplied only labour. It also makes some difference to his servility if a peasant has to bear allegience only to the landlord. If he has to be loyal to both the state and the landlord then it could be either a case of double servility or divided loyalty. But the fundamental point at issue is the subjection of the peasantry, and that subjection is found in all the possible situations to which we have referred earlier. There is no doubt that this subjection is a characteristic of early medieval Indian social structure.

It is argued that the peasant in medieval India enjoyed autonomy of production because he had 'complete' control over the means of production.[7] What is the significance of owning the means of production? Is it not meant for using the fruits of production? Do the fruits stay with the peasant or are these substantially appropriated by the landlord? How does this appropriation become possible? What is the mechanism that enables the landlord to appropriate the surplus, a part of that fruit? Is it merely because of his control over the means of production or because of his coercive power? Or is it extracted through the ideological weapon such as the peasant's belief that he is duty bound to pay? The latter ideology that the landlords are the parents of the peasants[8] is reminiscent of the tribal outlook. But this idea may have been further fostered by the priestly landlords in medievel times. At present we will not try to answer all these questions but take up the problem of the distribution of the resources of production in early medieval India.

Obviously land was the primary means of production. But the real difficulty about the understanding of distribution of land is caused when we think in terms of exclusive control over land by one party or the other. It should be made clear that in early medieval times in the same piece of land the peasant held inferior rights and the landlords held superior rights. One may possess land, labour, oxen, other animals and agricultural implements. But we have to find out how effective is this 'control' over the means of production. Do other conditions such as taxes, forced labour, constant interference by on-the-spot beneficiaries, who were ever present, make the peasant's control really operational? Obviously nobody would kill a hen that lays eggs. So peasants would be allowed to stay alive. But that should not be understood as their effective control over the means of production.

In fact land grants leave hardly any doubt that the landlords enjoyed a good measure of general control in the means of production. Why did the landlords claim various types of rents from the peasants and how could they collect their demands? Clearly they did so on the strength of royal charters which conferred on them either the villages or pieces of land or various types of taxes. Why did the king claim taxes? Formerly the king claimed taxes on the ground that he afforded protection to the people. In early medieval law-books he claimed taxes on the ground that he was the owner of the land.[9]

Numerous epithets indicate that the king was the owner of the land in early medieval times.[10] Now by the charter he delegated this royal authority to the beneficiary, and on this strength the beneficiary claimed taxes. The king was called *bhūmidaḥ*, giver of land. It was repeatedly said that the merit of giving land accrues to him who possesses it.[11]

Generally the early charters give the beneficiary usufructuary rights. But the later charters grant such concessions as render the beneficiary the de facto owner of the village land. The donated villages constitute his estate. For example, the beneficiary is entitled to collect taxes, all kinds of income, all kinds of occasional taxes, and this 'all' (*sarva*)[12] is never specified. Similarly he is entitled to collect proper and improper taxes,[13] fixed and not fixed taxes,[14] and at the end of the list of the taxes the term et cetera (*ādi, ādikam*)[15] is used. All this adds enormously to the power of the beneficiary. These extraordinary provisions could serve as a self-regulating mechanism as and when production increased,[16] but they could also interfere with the expansion of production. Some provisions clearly created the superior rights of the beneficiary in the land of the peasants. For example, the land charters of Madhya Pradesh, northern Maharashtra, Konkan and Gujarat in Gupta and post-Gupta times empower the beneficiary to evict the old peasants and introduce new ones; he could assign lands to others. Now such concessions leave no doubt that the beneficiary was armed with superior rights in land, which of course was in actual occupation of the cultivator. Most grants after the 7th century A.D. give away the village along with low land, fertile land, water reservoirs all kinds of trees and bushes, pathways and pasture grounds. In eastern India grants, the village was granted along with mango trees, *mahuā* (Bassia datifolia) trees and jack-fruit trees and various other agrarian resources. Cotton, hemp, coconut and arecanut trees are also given away in grants, but this happens mostly after the 10th century when cash crops assume importance. Such provisions connect the agrarian production directly with the beneficiary and, more importantly, transfer almost all communal agrarian resources to him. If a peasant does not have free access to various agrarian resources his autonomy in production is substantially crippled. Only a free exercise of the agrarian rights mentionad above can make his unit effective in production. Till recent times the powerful landlords barred and blocked the access of the weak and helpless peasants to such rights and could make their life impossible. Of course the caste system helped this process. The untouchables had no access to public tanks, wells, etc. Even if they possessed their bits of land, how could they function independently in production?

Most charters ask the peasants to carry out the orders of the beneficiaries.[17] These orders may relate not only to the payment of taxes which will be concerned with the fruits of production but they may also relate to the means and processes of production. In a way the blanket authority to extract obedience places the peasant at the beck and call of the beneficiary. It implies general control over the labour power of the peasants and undoubtedly labour is an essential ingredient of the means of production. This labour may be used either in the fields cultivated by the peasant or in those directly managed by the beneficiary. The beneficiaries may insist on having certain types of produce for their ostentatious and unproductive consumption, and with all the seigniorial rights that they possess they can compel the peasants to produce those cereals or cash crops which they need.

We may also note that the law-books of Yājñavalkya, of Bṛhaspati and Vyāsa specify four graded stages of land rights in the same piece of land. Thus we hear of *mahīpati*, *kṣetrasvāmin*, *karṣaka* and the subtenant or leaseholder.[18] It is important that the medieval jurists understood *svāmitva* in the sense of ownership and *svatva* in the sense of property, and this was considered to be a significant distinction in Hindu law.[19] The *svāmin* therefore could be equated with the landed beneficiary and the *karṣaka* or the *kṣetrika* with the rent-paying tenant peasant. Multiple, hierarchical rights and interests in land, which was the chief means of production, can be inferred even from Gupta land sale transactions. These transactions mention the interest of not only the king but also that of the local administrative body (*adhikaraṇa*) dominated by big men; we also hear of the beneficiaries and of the rights of the occupant of the plot.[20] Of course in several Gupta transactions no occupant is mentioned, and it further appears that money for the purchase of the land is paid not only to the *adhikaraṇa* but also probably to the occupant. These typical land transactions are found in Bangladesh. But in the grant system which became widespread in post-Gupta times the local *adhikaraṇa* disappeared, and was generally not consulted in matters of land grants.

Hierarchical control over land was created by large-scale subinfeudation, especially from the eighth century onwards.[21] Subinfeudation gave rise to graded types of landlords, different from the actual tillers of the soil. Such a process seems to be in line with a significant generalization made by Marx about feudalism. According to him "feudal production is characterized by division of soil amongst the greatest possible number of subfeudatories."[22]

The peasantry was divested more and more of its homogeneous and egalitarian character. Many indications of unequal distributions of land in the village are available. We hear not only of brāhmaṇas but also of the chief brāhmaṇa, *mahattama*, *uttama*, *kṛṣvala*, *karṣaka*, *kṣetrakara*, *kuṭumbin* and *kāruka*, land endowed brāhmaṇas and *agrahāras*. We also hear of *kṣudra prakṛti* or petty peasants, not to speak of Meda, Andhra and *caṇḍāla*. It is obvious that certain people in the villages had a greater share in the sources of production and apparently possessed more than they could manage directly. It is also obvious that such people got their lands cultivated by petty peasants either through lease holding or through sharecropping or through the system of serfdom. We have therefore no means to establish that most peasants living in the villages were in 'complete' control of the means of production.

Terminological studies throw interesting and revealing light on the relation of the peasant to the land in early India. The English term peasant, which literally means rustic or countryman, can be translated into *jānapada*, which means an inhabitant of the countryside. That the *jānapada* of the territorial unit formed by the countryside was considered to be a source of revenues is well known. Among the other qualities of a *janapada* are those of possessing active peasants capable of bearing taxes and fines (punishments).[23] Naturally when the peasantry was oppressed it led to the revolt of the peasants (*janapada-kopa*), which term occurs in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya.[24] Curiously the term *janapada* is not in much use in medieval Sanskrit literature although it occurs in early medieval inscriptions. In medieval times *jana* came to mean a dependent who was valued and acquired because of his labour power. Thus he could be a servile peasant. What is more significant, in several Indo-Aryan dialects of Bihar the term means field labourer. In practice some of these labourers are given small patches of land to earn their subsistence. This practice is apparently a survival of the medieval system according to which *jana* or field workers were possessed by and transferred to landed magnates, as can be inferred not only from inscriptions but also from works on horoscopy.[25] This would show that the tribal *jana* with egalitarian ethos is reduced to almost a serf.

The terms for the peasant used in medieval texts, and particularly inscriptions, indicate the change in the nature of the peasant's relation to the land he cultivated. From the age of the Buddha to the advent of the Gupta period taxpaying vaiśyas continued as an omnibus order, comprising mostly peasants. But by early medieval times they were reduced to the position of the śūdras who, in spite of having acquired peasanthood, continued to bear the hallmark of servitude.[26] *Gahapati*, literally head of the household, was the term used for the landowning peasant in early Pali texts[27] typical of the middle Gangetic plains which witnessed the rise of the first large states. He seems to have enjoyed substantial autonomy in his unit of production. But the term almost disappears in land grant inscriptions. *Gahapati* or *grahapati* becomes village headman in later texts.[28] A clear term for peasant is *kṣetrika* or *kṣetrin*,[29] which means controller of land, but even this is sometimes understood as an agriculturist or cultivator in later texts and lexicons. From *kṣetrika* in Assamese is derived *khetiyaka*,[30] which means cultivator or husbandman, and is not necessarily the owner of the field. A common term used for the peasant in many grants, especially in those from eastern India, is *kṣetrakara*,[31] which literally means cultivator. The term *shetkari* in Marathi is probably derived from it,[32] and does not always mean the owner of the land. Some other terms used in inscriptions are *karṣaka*[34] and *kuṭumbin*.[34] The term *kuṭumbin* gives some indication of an autonomous peasant family, but it occurs mainly in early land records from eastern India and Madhya Pradesh. In later grants from eastern India it is replaced by *kṣetrakara* or *karṣaka*. In Gujarat and Rajasthan the *kutumbika* loses his status, for he is sometimes transferred to the beneficiary along with the land.[35] According to Yājñavalkya (c A.D. 300) the *karṣaka* is a mere cultivator in the service of the landowner or *kṣetrasvāmin*, whose field lay under the general control of the king (*mahīpati*).[36] In the Candella grants in eastern Madhya Pradesh the *karṣaka* was made over to the assignee along with the village.[37] Land grants also use the term *hālika*[38] or ploughman. Sharecroppers are indicated by *ārddhika, arddhasīrika* or *arddhasīrin*. In literature the word *kināsa* is also used.[39] Evidently these terms have nothing to do with control over land. The term *kisān*, so common now in India, is derived from *kṛśāna* or one who ploughs. The word *kṛṣvala*[40] or cultivator is also frequently used in medieval texts. The term *lāngalopajīvin* or one who lives by ploughing is used in the *Bṛhat Samhitā*.[41]

A review of the terms used for the peasant in medieval inscriptions and literature fails to present the peasant's image as a controller of land. On the other hand we have such technical terms as *bhoktā, bhogi, bhogika, bhogījana, bhogapati, bhogapatika, bhogikapālaka, bhogirūpa, mahābhogī, bṛhadbhogī, bṛhadbhogika*, etc. used generally for those who enjoyed landed estates.[42] Here we have not taken into account many other terms connected with *rājā, rāṇaka, sāmanta, maṇḍaleśvara*, etc. who happened to be large landed intermediaries. The contrast between the two types of terms is obvious. Some people are meant for cultivating, and some meant for enjoying the fruits of production. There is nothing to show that the peasants who produced were in firm and independent control over their holdings. And finally there was the state symbolized by the king, whose general authority over land was recognized by numerous epithets used for him in early medieval records.[43]

The point that there were superior and inferior rights in the same piece of land was made much earlier,[44] but the common phrase 'means of production' was not used in that context. It may be added now that the practice of granting a village with all possible taxes and impositions and with all its resources created a kind of feudal property in contrast to peasant property and communal rights. The new phenomenon caused headache to medieval jurists and law commentators, who found neither much of a sanction nor a precedent in the early lawbooks. Therefore Vijñāneśvara, the famous author of the *Mitāk-*

ṣarā, which enjoyed authority in a large part of the country in legal matters, propounded the principle of the popular recognition of property. He and his followers, including Mitra Miśra, maintained that property has its basis in popular recognition without any dependence on the *śāstras*.[45] Commenting on a passage of Gautama,[46] Haradatta of about the twelfth century expressed a similar view. According to him even short enjoyment of *bhūmi*, which is explained as cultivated field (*kṣetra*) and orchards, gardens, etc. (*ārāmadikā*) confers property-rights on the enjoyer.[47] Short enjoyment probably means a period of less than ten years.[48] The complexities caused by the superimposition of new rights on the means of production hitherto effectively controlled by the peasants, also because of their free access to various village resources, baffled the medieval jurists who had to recognize the multiplicity of rights in the same piece of land. It is worth reproducing a quotation which was used by me earlier. "The Indian jurists took it for granted that the incidents of particular manifestations of ownership might differ, while the *svatva* (rights)[49] of the king, the *svatva* of the landowner, the *svatva* of the tenant-farmer, and in an extreme case, even the *svatva* of the mortgagee in possession (as against a trespasser) were all comprehensible under the single term of property."[50] It has been shown that in law as well as in actual practice these rights were graded. In the Indian context one could therefore talk of the varying degrees of control over land, which was the primary means of production, and not of exclusive rights of either the landlord or the peasant. But the grants show an increasing tendency to establish the superior rights of the landlord at the cost of both the king and the peasantry so much so that ultimately assignments are converted into virtual estates.

More effective control over the means of production obtained in such cases as transferred plots of land to the beneficiaries. Many big plots of land in Vidarbha and Maharashtra were assigned to gods and brāhmaṇas under the Vākāṭakas and also under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas. For example, eight thousand *nivartanas* of land was granted to one thousand brāhmaṇas by Pravarasena.[51] Similarly four hundred *nivartanas* of land was granted to a single brāhmaṇa.[52] Again the same measure of land was granted to a god.[53] Further 2052 *nivartanas* of land was granted to brāhmaṇas.[54] We learn from earlier authorities that in the Deccan land measuring 6 *nivartanas* was considered to be sufficient for maintaining a family of a brāhmaṇa which may have consisted of 5 to 8 members. But the instances given above refer to large stretches of land, which could not be cultivated by the brāhmaṇa beneficiaries themselves. Even if labour in a brāhmaṇa family was available for smaller pieces of land, they would not actually cultivate it because of social inhibitions. But, more importantly, grants of large plots introduced an element of direct control of the beneficiary over the means of production.

An important factor which gave the beneficiaries general control over the means of production was the conferment of seigniorial rights on them. The charters authorized the beneficiaries to punish people guilty of ten offences,[55] including those against family, property, person, etc., and to try civil cases.[56] Further royal officers were not allowed to enter their territory[57] and cause any kind of obstruction in their functioning.[58] All these are as good as manorial rights, and might even enable the beneficiary to force the peasant to work in his field. It would appear that the right to try cases on the spot involving the imposition of fines could seriously interfere with the process of production. It is therefore obvious that the political and judicial rights, which were non-economic rights, helped the beneficiaries to carry out the economic exploitation of the peasants in an effective manner living in his estate. This may have been a successful way of governing the vast population because the crimes could be nipped in the bud on the spot. But at the same time these non-economic rights served to enforce the general economic authority of the beneficiaries over both the means and the processes of production. It may further be noted that in many cases the beneficiary was empowered to adopt all measures to enjoy the village, and the term used for this was *sarvopāyasamyuktam*.[59] He was also authorized to enjoy the fruits according to his sweet will. If we carefully examine the phrase *sambhogyā yavadicchā kriyāphalam*[60] it would mean that the donee could even intervene in the process of production. If a person is entitled to the enjoyment of the fruits of the process of production according to his discretion, he may develop a natural tendency to control the process (*kriyā*) itself on which the nature and the amount of yield depend. Sometimes whatever belonged to the village (*svasambhoga sametaḥ*) was to be enjoyed by the beneficiary.[61] The beneficiary was also granted the village along with all its products (*sarvotpattisahitaḥ*).[62] The Candella charters from eastern Madhya Pradesh name the crops that were produced in the donated villages. Does it mean that the peasant could not alter the pattern of crops ? At any rate all such provisions could create the interest of the landed beneficiary in the means and process of production. It would be really extraordinary if the beneficiary does not keep an eye over the resources, processes and fruits of production in such cases.

It is not clear how the peasants were provided with agricultural implements. The charters authorize the beneficiaries to enjoy all that is hidden under the earth. This will amount to giving the mining rights to the beneficiaries. It is well known that the mining rights belonged exclusively to the king. The king may have acquired this monopoly at the initial stage as the head of the tribe or the community. Once this exclusive control over iron and other types of mines passed into the hands of the beneficiaries, they could also control the supply of agricultural implements to the peasants. But in pre-feudal times the big landowners did not have such rights in lands. Mining rights belonged to the king who symbolized the community, and the peasants may not have experienced difficulties in procuring agricultural implements.

Not only are the successors of the king and people in power asked to observe the terms of the grants[63] but also all those who would upset the grant are threatened with the use of force.[64] In some warnings corporal punishment (*śarīradaṇḍam*) is clearly mentioned.[65] The threat to use force is found mostly in the grants from Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra and Karnataka, and the earliest example belongs to the fourth century in a Pallava grant from Guntur district. In addition, the enemies of the land grant were invested with all kinds of curses and most heinous sins. The idea that a peasant was the complete master of the means of production is also belied by the philosophical teachings found at the end of most grants. The grants underline the instability of life. Apparently this instability of life is based not merely on the idea of death which overtakes everybody ultimately but also on the fickleness of fortune. The concept of the fickleness of fortune (i.e., mobility of Lakṣmī) is mainly derived from the frequent transfer of control over the means of production from one hand to the other. It would therefore appear that ideology, derived from the relations of production, strengthened the general control of the beneficiaries over the means of production. Ideology was used for indoctrinating the producers in ancient times also. Through ideology and administration, the priests and warriors regulated production and distribution in prefeudal times, but now they acquired an effective hand in the mode of production because of their general, superior control over land, which was the chief means of production. The beneficiary started with the state-sanctioned title to various types of dues delivered by the peasants to the state, but in course of time his claims were made so comprehensive that because of his local presence and delegated administrative powers he could convert his title into possession and could treat the donated village as his estate. It is clear that the peasants had to reckon with the control of the donee over the village resources.

The real problem therefore is not to demonstrate the autonomy of peasant production which in any case was drastically curtailed in the land grant areas. But it is more worthwhile to determine the extent and impact of peasant population working in the land grant areas and that of similar people working in the non-land grant areas in medieval times[66] Since references to palm-leaf (*tālapatra*) and birch-bark (*bhūrjapatra*) *śāsana* charters even for religious purposes are found in Assam and Madhya Pradesh, it is likely that many such grants were issued in favour of both religious and secular parties. We learn how these *patra* grants were burnt and replaced by copper plate charters in Assam[67] and Madhya Pradesh.[68] Another important problem is to identify and plot on maps the donated villages or plots of land regionwise within a short time bracket (say within half a century or so). We have shown earlier that in the donated villages the beneficiaries enjoyed superior authority in the means of production. Donated fields, many of them very large in area, were without doubt under the direct and complete control of the beneficiaries, who manipulated its production resources and processes.

It is argued that landed beneficiaries were mainly concerned with the problem of surplus collection. But the question of surplus collection/distribution cannot be viewed in isolation from that of the pattern of production. In a feudal system of production we expect the lord's share called rent, in labour and cash/kind, and this is coupled with a patron-client system of distribution, primarily between the peasant and the landlord. For surplus collection superior rights in the land of the peasants become the pre-condition. More surplus seems to have been extracted because of more product. In pre-Gupta times the surplus was mainly collected by the agents of the state in the form of taxes, or by priests in the form of gifts. There were a few landowners working with the help of slave and hired labourers in the age of the Buddha. We hear of state farms in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya. But state control could operate only in small areas. By and large the settled part of the country had independent units of production and was also blessed with some amount of market economy. But market economy was not so strong as would enable the rich landowner to invest his capital in new enterprises and work for profits, and would thus eventually lead him to the capitalist path. At best a millionaire such as Anāthapiṇḍika would purchase land for donation to the Buddha. There could be other such examples. Payment in cash could be made for the sale of cereals and for the purchase of petty commodities by the peasants. Generally, in pre-feudal times the priests, warriors and administrators were entitled to the surplus in the form of taxes and gifts for services rendered, but a good deal of these payments was made in cash. Peasant units of production first appeared in the age of the Buddha and not in post-Maurya times. Slavery was neither preponderant nor negligible in production. Large holdings, including Maurya state farms, were worked by slaves and hired labourers, in the middle Gangetic plains, but big landowners were swamped by peasants. The vaiśya, who was almost identical with the peasant, was the principal taxpayer. His counterpart in the Buddhist idiom was a peasant householder who contributed to the increase in cereals and paid taxes to the state (*gahapatiko kārkārako rāsivaḍḍhako*). Thus the peasant units of production functioned more or less effectively in pre-Gupta times. But after that the authority of the peasants over these units suffered erosion because of the appearance of landed beneficiaries supplemented by large disappearance of trade and urbanism. In India the problem of the rise of the landed magnates is not connected with "the decomposition of the slave mode of production" but with the decreasing control of the peasant over his unit of production, coupled with his restricted access to the communal agrarian resources. As will be shown later, overtaxation and imposition of forced labour by the state created such problems as called for new remedies.

To think that the fight for a share in the cake does not necessarily affect the production of the cake is to ignore historical examples. It is true even of capitalist societies in which such fights eventually lead to structural changes. In conditions of early medieval times the beneficiary demanded his pound of flesh because he claimed superior rights in land. If the object of the grant was the maintenance of the beneficiary and the provision of requirements either for worship or for domestic purposes the peasant could be compelled to produce certain cereals which were badly needed by the donee.

If parts of the products are placed at the disposal of the grantee, what is the difference between enjoying the means of production, that is, land, and the fruits of production? Land does not mean anything without its products. Whoever seizes land rich with crops (*sasyasamṛdhāṃ vasundharām*) is guilty of great sins, so goes the medieval saying. Thus land carried meaning in the context of its products. Surplus was collected not only after production but also in the course of production. On-the-spot collection and quick administration could be the most effective way of managing a large population.

On the basis of the land charters we can say that in the donated areas the landed beneficiaries enjoyed general control over production resources. Of course they did not enjoy specific control over every plot of land that the peasant cultivated. But there is nothing to question their control over the plots of lands that were directly donated to them by the king, sometimes along with the sharecroppers[69] and weavers and sometimes along with the cultivators.[70] This raises the problem of serfdom. It is thought that feudalism was identical with serfdom, and there seems to be an assumption that serfdom was the only potent method of exploiting the peasants. It may be very effective, but other forms of servitude imposed on the peasantry did not prove inoperative and unproductive. After all what is the essence of serfdom? In this system small farm units are attached to big farm units, and the two are interdependent for purposes of production. Big farms are directly managed by manorial magnates but cultivated by those who possess small plots. Therefore serfdom means giving more of surplus labour than surplus produce. But in the Indian case surplus produce is extracted more through the general control exercised by the landed intermediaries than by their employment of serfs. A serf also occupies some land and provides his family with subsistence. But he not only pays rent in cash or kind for exploiting his unit of production but also spends extra hours labouring on the field of his lord. However, if these extra hours of his are used on the field occupied by him the extra yield does not necessarily stay with the cultivator. On the other hand, it enables him to pay more rent in cash or kind to his lord.

It has been argued that serfdom is an incidental feature in the case of India.[71] But the evidence cited so far would show that it is more than incidental.[72] In any case if the lord gets his share without reducing too many people to serfdom, what basic difference does it make to him or to the social pattern? Both systems are concerned with extracting the lord's share; in both the cultivator is a dependent peasant under the exploitation of his lord, and in both cases the social structure is beset with the internal contradiction between the landlord and the actual tiller. A beneficiary may not possess big plots but he possesses too many plots which make management difficult. In fact laws of partition of land became effective in Gupta and post-Gupta times[73] and they may have contributed to the fragmentation of land. Fragmentation of land is also indicated by epigraphic sale transactions found in Bangladesh.[74] Therefore if a landlord too possesses many plots, tenanting and sharecropping may be more convenient than getting the land cultivated through the deployment of serfs.

It is argued that because soil in India was very fertile, there was no scope for the rise of serfdom or forced labour.[75] But we have indications of forced labour in the middle Gangetic basin where the soil is the most fertile. Till recent times poor tenants, belonging to lower castes, were forced by landlords from upper castes to work in the fields at meagre wages.[76] Peasants were compelled to plough the land of the landlords and do various kinds of odd jobs for the sake of the landlords in other fertile areas. This is known as *harī* and *begārī* in the whole Gangetic basin area. The medieval term for the first is *halikākara*[77] and for the second is *viṣṭi*, from which *bethbegārī* is derived. The Pāla charters found in Monghyr, Bhagalpur, Saharsa and Nalanda districts, all forming parts of the middle Gangetic plains, mention the term *sarvapīḍāparihṛta*. This means that the peasants were subjected to all types of forced labour and oppressions, but when the village was transferred to a beneficiary he became entitled to these advantages without the interference of the state. Forced labour may have originated in less populated areas but not necessarily in less fertile parts. In any case, once its usefulness was recognized it spread to more populated parts.

Feudalism flourished in paddy producing areas. Paddy production requires 50 per cent more man hours than wheat production. According to a popular saying in Patna and Gaya districts, wheat cultivation can be undertaken even by a widow, who represents an image of helplessness in the countryside. Evidently wheat requires less and barley requires least labour. Therefore paddy transplantation would mean scarcity of labour in peak season; and it could be necessary to take to forced labour. We need not add that the term *sotpadyamānaviṣṭi* is used frequently.[78] It has been translated to mean the use of forced labour as occasions arise. But since the term qualifies the donated land or village, it might mean the labour generated or produced by the village in future.[79] This was a significant development in a good part of the country. It would imply that besides customary sources of forced labour new sources could be exploited by the beneficiaries according to their needs. Unfortunately these sources are not specified in medieval records. That there were various types of forced labour is clear from the use of the term *sarvaviṣṭi*[80] in many land grants, particularly in Vākāṭaka grants. It is obvious that these many types may have included the use of labour in the fields. The evidence from the *Skanda Purāṇa* produced by B.N.S. Yadava leaves little doubt that hundreds of people were compel'ed to do forced labour and this was evidently meant for production.[81] Hence serfdom cannot be dismissed as an incidental feature.

If serfdom is understood as compulsive attachment of the peasants to the soil, it prevailed in good parts of Madhya Pradesh, eastern India, Chamba and Rajasthan. In many cases the charters clearly transfer the peasants, artisans and even traders to the beneficiaries.[82] In most charters they ask the villagers, the peasants and other inhabitants of the villages to stay in their villages and to carry out the orders of the beneficiaries. This fact of immobility of peasants and artisans has not been contested by anybody so far. However, it is argued that even if these people were allowed to move, what purpose it would have served. If such a view is taken, then what is the point in underlining the absence of serfdom in the Indian context? After all, in conditions of serfdom a peasant has to be tied to his piece of land and when that piece of land is transferred the peasant is automatically transferred. This practice prevailed widely in early medieval times. Nevertheless, they were not engaged widely in agricultural operations in the fields of their landlords. If it is argued that peasants were not employed in production but in building forts, roads, temples, massive and impressive structures, then we may say that all such grandiose projects were undertaken by the landed aristocracy, chiefs and princes, to strike the people with their awe and majesty. They could be of great indirect help in collecting taxes and presents from the peasantry. Some of them, such as building of roads, could be eventually useful from the point of production. The employment of forced labour therefore did not depend on the fertility of the soil but on the realization of its usefulness by the landlords. There is no doubt that the rural aristocracy led an ostentatious and luxurious life requiring much consumption. Although we cannot measure the rising expectations of the landlords we notice indications of growing luxurious living.

The practice of forced labour, sharecropping or the leasing of land was promoted and supported by social institutions and inhibitions. The law-books ask the brāhmaṇas not to take to the plough. It seems that the upper caste people could not transplant paddy.[83] Naturally even in a small holding which could be managed by their family labour, such people would need some labour which could be either forced labour or sharecropping. In such a case it is immaterial whether the soil is less fertile or more fertile, for at any rate labour will have to be drafted from outside the family unit. Lack of labour power and plenty of land create conditions for introducing an element of compulsion. But this can happen only in a particular socio-economic formation. We have lack of labour in socialist and even capitalist countries, but that does not necessarily lead to forced labour.

The idea that the gap between the labour potential of the family and the land it has leads to feudal conditions may be far from true. Underutilization of labour capacity may not necessary produce demand for such labour in the form of forced labour. This labour can also be invested in auxiliary crafts in response to agricultural and domestic demands. But, what is more important, if the needs of the landlord are met otherwise through rents and presents, why should he assume direct and onerous responsibility for cultivation and mobilize labour power for that purpose? At present we have no means to measure the needs, demands and expectations of the landlord, which may vary region-wise. These needs could be easily met by the landlords because of the provisions of the charters empowering them to depart from customary and established taxes and impose and introduce new levies and new forms of forced labour.

It is repeatedly stated that no new mode of socio-economic formation can appear as a result of political, administrative and juridical measures,[84] little realizing that the colonial system in India owed its origin largely to such measures. The king in ancient India symbolized state authority, and the state was backed by priests and warriors who lived on the surplus produced by the peasants and further supplied by the artisans. This kind of state and society appeared in the age of the Buddha. It continued to function more or less smoothly till the 3rd century A.D. But there are many passages in the epics and the purāṇas, which speak of a kind of social crisis symbolised by the Kali age. These passages are ascribed to the second half of the 3rd century A.D. and the beginning of the 4th century A.D. They depict a state of affairs in which rural people were oppressed with taxes and forced labour,[85] which was considered an important element of the military power. The oppressions of the state coupled with the havoc caused by natural calamities created a state of chaos, and the lower orders, particularly the vaiśyas and the śūdras, refused to perform the functions assigned to them. On top of it the peasants refused to pay taxes.[86] The *Manu Smṛti*, *Śānti Parva* and other texts suggested two measures to overcome this social crisis. One was the use of force or *daṇḍa*, which is glorified in these texts. The other was the restoration of the *varṇāśramadharma* which was considered to be the bedrock of the class-based and state-based society. Obviously these measures alone could not cope with the critical situation. Since it became difficult to collect taxes it was not possible to run the state and to pay the priests, administrators, the army and numerous officials. Apparently, as an alternative, the practice of land grants, which was not unknown in early times, was adopted on a wide scale in a major part of the country, particularly from the 4th-5th century A.D. onwards. It will therefore appear that we have an indication of a crisis in production relations, which may not be unconnected with changes in the mode of production. The fact cannot be discounted that trade[87] and urbanism[88] suffered a distinct decline, and the absence of gold coins for three centuries between the 7th and the 10th and paucity of other types of coins[89] are well known. There is practically no indication of the use of slaves in production. All these are presages of change in the methods and relations of production. Hence the production system as a whole was afflicted with certain maladies, which compelled the state to convert land/land revenues into a general mode of payment for religious and administrative services. The grant system relieved the state of the heavy responsibility of getting the taxes collected all over the countryside by its agents and then of disbursing them in cash or kind. On the other hand, priests, warriors and administrators were asked to fend for themselves in the villages assigned to them for their enjoyment. The system also relieved the state of the responsibility of maintaining law and order in the donated villages which now became almost the sole concern of the beneficiaries. Therefore it would be wrong to assume that political, administrative and juridical measures, which created new property relations in land, were undertaken by the state entirely on its own.

The social crisis apparently led to the withdrawal of slaves from production, and to the provision of land for them as tenants and sharecroppers. This explains to a good extent the elevation of śūdras to peasanthood and their participation in rituals. It seems that landowners converted śūdra labourers into peasants and themselves became landlords living on rent. The substantial *gahapatis* of the age of the Buddha probably turned landlords. That the village headman tended to become landlord has already been shown,[90] although the causes for this transformation need investigation.

The new socio-economic formation that emerged as a result of the appearance of a class of landlords and that of a subject peasantry had its own limitations. The peasants were accustomed to give certain taxes and services to the state, and if the demand of the beneficiary was confined to those claims, in normal times the routine payment could continue. But the beneficiary would impose proper and improper taxes, fixed and unfixed taxes, would collect all kinds of taxes and, what is worse, they could make additional impositions which were covered by the term *ādi*, i.e. etcetera. In certain areas they could also introduce new forms of forced labour. On top of this all communal and agrarian resources hitherto enjoyed by the peasants were transferred to the landed beneficiaries who were ever present on the spot. This situation caused constant conflict between those who claimed rent on the strength of their royal charters and others who claimed immunity on the basis of customary and immemorial rights which would be certainly known to local people but because of their illiteracy could not be shown in black and white. Hence there was bound to be constant friction, tensions and struggle between the landed beneficiaries and the servile peasantry. This might lead to litigations between the beneficiaries, and also between the beneficiary and the peasants. Because of the common practice of land grants and the enormous advantages derived from them the brāhmaṇas forged many charters (*kūṭa-śāṣana*) and claimed enjoyment of villages on that basis. But there were so many valid charters that the conflict between the landlord and the peasants was an ever present possibility. In order to settle this conflict Nārada, Bṛhaspati, *Agnī Purāṇa* and other authorities give the final authority to the royal charter in case of dispute. They lay down that if there is a conflict between the religious right (*dharma*), contract (*vyavadhāra*) right customary (*carita*) right and the right derived from the royal charter (*rājaśāsana*) the royal charter will override all the other sources of the law or authority.[92]

But it seems that this overriding power of the royal charter did not work in all cases. We have the case of the Kaivartas, a fishing and cultivating community in Bangladesh, who rose against Rāmapāla in the 11th century A.D. They fought with bamboo sticks riding on baffaloes. So powerful was their revolt that two dozen vassals had to be mobilized by Rāmapāla in order to put down the Kaivarta rebellion. This is an important example of peasant revolt.[93] The possibility of clash is also indicated in some Bengal grants which mention the term *karṣaṇavirodhi sthāna.*[94] At least two grants take pains to show that they do not clash with the existing cultivating rights of the peasants. Therefore the possibility of clash between the peasant and the incoming beneficiaries is clearly visualized. Similarly in many grants from Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra the people are warned that if they tried to upset the grant in any manner then they would be punished with force.[95] This point is stated repeatedly[96] in many inscriptions. In some cases this threat is directed towards royal officials, but mostly it is a general threat meant for all. Again in the texts of this period, *brahmahatyā*, that is, killing of brāhmaṇa, is considered to be a great sin and it occurs in many Purāṇas. Why does the murder of brāhmaṇa become so important in early medieval times? Apparently it is because of his becoming a landed beneficiary and therefore an oppressor. If we look at the distribution of hero stones in Karnataka and other parts of south India it would appear that some of them are found in the *agrahāra* areas.[97] This would again suggest that open frictions appeared between the beneficiary of the *agrahāra* and the peasants living there. In the case of Karnataka, R.N. Nandi has collected certain evidence which suggests some kind of collaboration between the brāhmaṇas and the peasants in the beginning, but eventually shows open conflict between the two.[98] D.N Jha refers to several instances of conflict between the peasants and the beneficiary landlords in Coḷa inscriptions, particularly after 1000 A.D.[99]

Although we can see and visualize polarity between the central state and smaller states, polarity between various types of beneficiaries, and polarity between landed magnates and the cultivator, the human factor operating in these polarities does not come out clearly in our sources. It is thought that the peasant's independent control over his process of production prevented acute social tensions.[100] But as shown earlier, this control was more dependent than independent. The mulitiplication of the existing units of production in new areas could obviate occasions for open conflicts leading to changes. But to a good degree the seeming stability was prompted by other factors which were closely linked with the system of production, especially with production relations. First, the caste system with the features of hierarchy and superiority, not to speak of untouchability, provided ritualistic sanction for the production and distribution system. It seems that the *jajmāni* system developed in the period and was part of a more or less self-sufficient economy. At the end of harvesting, on the threshing floor, portions of paddy were given to gods, brāhmaṇas, rulers and the various kinds of labourers, indicated by the term *bhṛtyavargapoṣaṇam*.[101] The brāhmaṇas, who controlled many 'estates', played a crucial ideological role in penetrating the consciousness of the peasantry and making them behave as they liked them to do. Some medieval religious reform movements apparently sought to improve the status of those who really produced and suffered, but those movements were manipulated to contain the conflicts and scotch the tensions; they could not rouse the peasantry to realities. In certain parts of the country, survivals of the bonds of kinship also helped to keep people together. This may have particularly happened in Rajasthan and Himalayan areas. Classes with conflicting interests were kept together through the performance of *pūjā*, *japa*, *vratas*, *tīrthas*, *saṃskāras*, *prāyaścittas* and through prospects of heaven and hell. The all-pervasive influence of astrology (*jyotiṣa*) and that of the doctrine of Vedānta kept the people reconciled to their lot. All these factors brought the people of opposite interests together.

It is held that lack of 'concentrated social effort' blocked changes in the means, methods and relations of production.[102] We may not have much idea about the social effort, but we can certainly identify significant changes in the mode of production in early medieval times. This period was undoubtedly an age of larger yield and a great agrarian expansion. It is possible to count hundreds of states, particularly in those areas which had never witnessed the rise of full-fledged states. A state presupposes an assured source of income which will enable it to maintain a good number of managerial staff. This could not be possible unless the agrarian base was strong enough to pay for the priests, officers, army men, etc.

A few technological innovations contributed to rural expansion. Apart from the use of the *araghaṭṭa,* the Persian wheel, the early Middle Ages saw several changes in agriculture. The importance attached to agriculture in this period is indicated by the fact that several texts were composed on it such as *Kṛṣiparāśara* in the north and Kamban's book in the south. Kaśyapa's *Kṛṣisūkti* has been found in the south,[103] but it may have belonged to some paddy producing area either in the north or south. It prescribes three methods of lifting water (i.e., using the *ghaṭī-yantra*) by men, oxen and elephants.[104] That certain persons were engaged in working the 'Persian' water-wheel can be inferred from the use of the term *arahaṭṭiyanarā* in a lexicon of the twelfth century.[105] The *Vṛkṣa Āyurveda* of about the tenth century recommends recipes for treating the diseases affecting the plants.[106] Apart from special attention being given to horses,[107] because they were used by chiefs and princes, animal husbandry was improved because of the care given to the treatment of cattle diseases.[108] In addition, detailed instructions regarding agriculture appear in the *Bṛhatsamhitā* of Varāhamihira, the *Agni Purāṇa* and the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa.*[109] Three crops, first mentioned by Pāṇini, were known widely,[110] and better seeds were produced.[111] Meteorological knowledge, based on observation, was far advanced in the *Kṛṣiparāśara.* The knowledge of fertilizers improved immensely and the use of the compost was known;[112] and, what is more important, irrigation facilities were expanded. The law-books lay down severe punishments for those who cause damage to tanks, wells, ponds, embankments, etc.[113] The construction of *vāpī* became very popular in Rajasthan and Gujarat. Its importance is also underlined in the work of Kaśyapa.[114] In his doctoral thesis V.K. Jain has prepared a map in which he has shown the distribution of the *vāpīs* (step wells) in western India in the 11th-13th centuries.[115] It is interesting to note that the term *vāpī* is derived from the Sanskrit root *vap* which means to sow. So it is clear that step wells were meant for irrigating the fields. Of course the use of iron implements attained a new peak in this period. In the *Paryāyamuktāvalī,* a medieval lexicon whose manuscripts have been found in West

Bengal and Orissa, as many as half a dozen types or grades of iron are mentioned.[116] The use of iron became so common that it began to be employed for non-utilitarian purposes. Several pillars, including the Mehrauli pillar in Delhi, were erected to mark the conquests of victorious princes. The increase in the number of the varieties of cereals including rice, wheat and lentils as well as in fruits, vegetables, legumes, etc. is striking. These can be inferred not only from the *Amarakoša* but more so from the *Paryāyamuktāvalī*.[117] According to the *Śūnya Purāṇa* more than 50 kinds of paddy were cultivated in Bengal.[118] Apart from the foundation of numerous states the various medieval texts suggest an enormous increase in agricultural production. Therefore agricultural technology in terms of a single major break may not be striking,[119] but the overall effect of various measures and improvement seems to have been substantial. However, mere increase in production may lead neither to stability nor to structural changes. For this certain other conditions including the rousing of the necessary consciousness may be needed.

Feudalism in India therefore was characterized by a class of landlords and by a class of subject peasantry, the two living in a predominantly agrarian economy marked by a decline of trade and urbanism and by a drastic reduction in metal currency. The superior state got its taxes collected and authority recognized by creating a number of inferior power blocs or even states (that is, landed priests, *maṭhas*, *vihāras*, *basadis*, temples, *agrahāras*, *brahmadeyas*, etc.) who generated the necessary social and ideological climate for this purpose. Unlike the European system most of the power structures within the state did not have to pay taxes. West European feudal lords granted land to their serfs in order to get their own occupied land cultivated. But Indian kings made land grants to get the taxes (surplus) collected. In their turn the grantees collected rents from their tenant-peasants who could be evicted and even subjected to forced labour.

Our comments are couched sometimes in terms of probabilities and reservations, because the nature of sources does not admit of clear and categorical statements. Nevertheless they raise some theoretical issues. The position of class is to be located in the overall system of production. But if a class covers those who either exclusively control the means of production or those who are completely deprived of such control, such a thing can happen only in a full-fledged capitalist system. The application of such a concept to pre-capitalist societies is riddled with difficulties, for even in the feudal society of Western Europe the serf enjoyed day-to-day control over his bit of the means of production.[120] In such a society class is best seen in the context of the unequal distribution of the surplus, which was eventually given a lasting basis by the unequal distribution of the means of production and strengthened by ideological and juridical factors. Secondly, ecological factors influence the development of material culture. But we find several countries with similar climatic conditions but dissimilar social structures. Therefore to attribute such structural phenomena as the absence of serfdom or the longevity of peasant autonomy to the carrying capacity of the soil would be going too far.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1] D.C Sircar, *Landlordism and Tenancy in Ancient and Medieval India as Revealed by Epigraphical Records*, Lucknow, 1969, Also see *JIH*, xliv, (1966) 351-357; li (1973) 56-59: *Journal of Ancient Indian History*, vi, (1972-73), 337-339; D.C. Sircar, ed, *Land System and Feudalism in Ancient India*, Calcutta, 1966. pp 11-23. Irfan Habib discusses "Indian Feudalism" in *The Peasant in Indian History*, Presidential Address, the Indian History Congress, 43rd Session, Kurukshetra, 1982.

[2] "Was There Feudalism in Indian History?" *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, viii, no. 3 (April 1981), 273-310. In this paper the whole medieval period is discussed but I will confine myself primarily to early medieval times (5th to 12th century), about which I have some idea. My task has been made easy because Dr Mukhia's criticisms have been effectively met by B.N.S. Yadava in *The Problem of the Emergence of Feudal Relations in Early India*. Presidential Address, for Indian History Congress, 41st Session, Bombay, 1980. In a similar address delivered at the 40th Session of the Indian History Congress held at Waltair in 1979 D.N. Jha anticipated and answered many of these objections in *Early Indian Feudalism: A Historiographical Critique*. Also see Suvira Jaiswal, "Studies in Early Indian Social History", *IHR*, vi (1979-80), 18-21.

[3] Marx-Engels, *Pre-Capitalist Socio-Economic Formations*, Moscow, 1979 p. 23.

[4] Mukhia op. cit., p 310, fn 225. In the discussion on variants Indian feudalism is seen as a distinct possibility.

[5] Kosminsky's views based on Marx and expressed in his *Studies in the Agrarian History of England in the Thirteenth Century*, Oxford, 1956, are summarized and discussed in Barry Hindess and Paul Q Hirst, *Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production*, London, 1975, pp. 222-23, 234-35.

[6] Marx considers tenants to be an object of feudal exploitation. According to him the feudal lord differs from the bourgeois in that he "does not try to extract the utmost advantage from his land. Rather he consumes what is there and calmly leaves the worry of producing to the serfs and tenants". Marx-Engels, op. cit., p. 20. In the 1880s Engels also concluded that serfdom is not solely a "peculiarly medieval-feudal form", ibid. p. 23. This implies that the feudal formation could have other features.

[7] Mukhia, op. cit., pp. 275, 290, 291, 293.

[8] I owe this to Ranjit Guha.

[9] The king is called *bhūsvāmin* by Kātyāyana, a lawgiver of about the sixth century (P.V. Kane, ed, verse 16).

[10] R S. Sharma, "From Gopati to Bhūpati" (a review of the changing position of the king), *Studies in History*, II 2, 1980, 6-8.

[11] *yasya yasya yadā bhūmih, tasya tasya tadā phalam, Select Inscriptions*, Bk III, p. 49, l. 26.

[12] The terms used are *sarvoparikarakarādānasmetaḥ*, *sarvakarasametaḥ*, *sarvakaravīsarjitaḥ*, etc. See Balachandra Jain, *Utkīrṇa-Lekha*, Raipur, 1961, pp, 56-57. The terms *samastapratyāya* and *sarvāyasameta* also occur (*IF*, 2nd edn, p 100). Also see *sarvādānasamgrāhya* (*EI*, v, no 5, l. 41).

[13] *IF*, 2nd. edn, p 98.

[14] The phrase used is *niyatāniyatasamastādāya*, all specified and unspecified dues. *EI*, no. 21, l. 26.

[15] *EI*, xxix, no. 7, l. 42; Jain, op. cit., p. 52.

[16] Mukhia rightly postulates that the village potentates would be the first to notice the rise in productivity and the first to demand a greater share in the peasant's produce. op. cit. p 309, fn. 214.

[17] The phrase *ājñāśravaṇavidheyībhūya* is common in north Indian grants.

[18] The point has been discussed in *IF*, 2nd edn, pp. 38-39.

[19] The distinction is brought out clearly in P.N. Sen, *The General Principles of Hindu Jurisprudence*, Tagore Law Lectures, 1909, University of Calcutta, 1918, p 42.

[20] *Select Inscriptions*, Bk III, nos. 16,18, 19, 41, 42, 43, etc.

[21] *IF*, 2nd edn., pp 73-75, 185-187.

[22] Marx-Engels, *Pre-Capitalist Socio-Ecomomic Formations*, p 22.

[23] ...*sadaṇḍakarasahaḥ karmaśīlakarṣako' baliśasvāmyavaravarṇaprāyo janapadasampat*, *Arthaśāstra* (of Kautilya), R.P. Kangle's edn, VI.1.

[24] *Aś*, I 13. The term *prakṛtikopa* or revolt of the subjects is used in V. 6 and VII. 6.

[25] B.N.S. Yadava, *The Problem of the Emergence of Feudal Relations*

in Early India, p 7. contains several references to the acquisition of *jana*.

[26] R.S. Sharma, *Śūdras in Ancient India*, 2nd edn, Delhi, 1980, ch. III.

[27] The term used is *kassako gahapati*, cultivating family head. *Aṅguttara Nikāya* (Pali Text Society, London), i, 239-240. But *gahapati*, in the sense of substantial peasant, is used in Pāli texts at many places.

[28] s.v. *griha*, Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Oxford, 1951.

[29] R.L. Turner, *A Ccmparative Dictionary of the Indo-Aryan Languages*, Oxford, 1973, no 3736.

[30] Ibid.

[31] R. Mukerji and S. K. Maity, *Corpus of Bengal Inscriptions bearing on History and Civilization of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1967, no. 18, l. 45; no. 22, l.46; no. 28, l. 52; no. 30, l. 48; no. 36, l. 36; no. 37, l. 32.

[32] Turner, op cit., no 3736.

[33] Mukerji and Maity, op cit., no 47, l 50.

[34] Ibid. no 7, l. 3; no 9, l. 3 (p 59).

[35] *IF*, 2nd edn, pp 188-189.

[36] Ibid. p 38.

[37] Ibid. p 188.

[38] Ibid. p 98, fn 3, 99.

[39] It is taken in the sense of a ploughman. See B.N.S. Yadava, *The Problem of the Emergence of Feudal Relations in Early India*, p. 25.

[40] *s.v. Kṛṣivala*, Monier-Williams, op cit.

[41] B.N.S. Yadava, *The Problem of the Emergence of Feudal Relations in Early India*, p 32.

[42] *IF*, 2nd edn, pp 12-13, 216.

[43] These terms are *avanīśa*, *avanīndra*, *kṣitipati*, *kṣitīndra*, *kṣitīśa*, *kṣiterādhipa*, *pārthiva*, *pṛthivīpati*, *pārthivendra*, *pṛthivīnātha*, *bhūpa*, *bhūpati bhūbhuj*, *bhūmipa bhūmiśvara*, *mahīpa*, *mahīpati*, *mahīpala mahīndra*, *mahāmahendra*, *urvīpati vasudhādhipa*, *vasudheśvara*, *sāmanta-bhūmiśvara*, etc. R S Sharma, "From Gopati to Bhūpati', op. cit. 8. 8 with fns. 81 and 82.

[44] *IF*, ch. IV.

[45] P.N. Sen, *The General Principles of Hindu Jurisprudence*, Tagore Law Lectures, 1909, University of Calcutta, 1918, pp 42-43, 46. The theory of popular recognition, which gives preference to unwritten laws, is known as *laukika svatvavāda*, (ibid. p 42). Several logicians such as Guru, Kumârila Svâmi and Pârthasârathi Miśra, who interpreted the Dharmaśâstras according to the canons of *mimāṃsā* also supported the popular recognition theory. Jimūtavâhana, Dhāreśvara etc., supported the śâstric view (ibid. p 42). The difference does reflect conflicting claims to land control in early medieval times.

[46] *Gautama Dharmaśūtra* (Varanasi 1966), 11-3-36. The passage reads *paśu bhūmistrīṇāmanatibhogaḥ*.

[47] *alpenāpi bhogena bhoktuḥ svam bhavati*. Commentary on Gautama, 11.3.36 By this interpretation cattle and women slaves are also covered.

It is interesting that a ten-year limit of enjoyment is set for acquiring ownership over the property of others in several cases by the commentator. Commentary on *Gautama*, 11.3.34-35.

[48] Commentary on *Gautama*, 11.3.34-35

[49] *Svatva* should be taken in the sense of property rights as has been done by P N. Sen. op cit., p 42.

[50] J.D M Derrett in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, xviii, 489.

[51] V.V. Mirashi, *Inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas, Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, v, no. 6, ll. 19-20.

[52] Ibid. no. 12, ll. 20-21.

[53] Ibid. no. 13, ll 22-23.

[54] Ibid. no. 14, ll. 22-32

[55] *IF*, 2nd edn, p 3; the common term used is *sadaṇḍa-daśāparāuhaḥ*.

[56] Ibid. The term *abhyantarasiddhi* is used.

[57] Ibid. p 2.

[58] *Select Inscriptions*, Bk III, no. 62, ll. 21-22.

[59] Mukerji and Maity, *Corpus of Bengal Inscriptions*, no. 47, l. 62.

[60] Ibid. 63.

[61] Ibid. no 46, l 22.

[62] *EI*, v, no. 20, l. 54. The village, situated near Nagpur, was granted by Kṛṣṇa III in 940-941.

[63] *Select Insciptions*, Bk III, no. 49, ll. 18-28, no. 50, ll. 15-24.

[64] ...*sadaṇḍanigrahaṃ kariṣyāmaḥ*. This phrase is found, with slight variations in many charters, Ibid. no. 61, ll 22-24; no. 62, ll.32-34; no. 64, ll 21-24; no. 65, ll 39-41; no. 67, ll 24-25.

[65] Ibid. no. 67, ll 24-25.

[66] In the context of slave society it is held that if 20 per cent of people are engaged in production as slaves in a society, it should be considered a slave society. Five such societies have been identified. Keith Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, Cambridge, 1978, pp 99-100. But the qualitative place of slaves or other categories of servile people in the total mode of production deserves equal consideration.

[67] D C. Sircar, *Indian Epigraphy*, Delhi, 1965, p 97, fn 2.

[68] Balachandra Jain, *Utkīrṇa-Lekh*, Raipur, 1961, no. 3, 11.6-11, (p 8).

[69] *Select Inscriptions*, Bk III, no. 65, 11.38-39.

[70] Ibid, no. 61, l.15.

[71] Mukhia, op cit., p 286.

[72] *IF*, 2nd edn. pp 19, 31, 40-43, 56, 60, 67, 68, 99-101, 109, 195-18; B N S. Yadava "Immobility and Subjection of Indian Peasantry in Early Medieval Complex", *IHR*, i, (1974) 18-27. A good deal of evidence can be obtained from G K. Rai, *Involuntary Labour in Ancient India*, Allahabad, 1981, but the passage from Vatsyayana's *Kāmsūtra* (V.5.5) is inaccurately construed and translated.

[73] *IF*, 2nd edn, pp 118-119.

[74] Ibid. p 49.

[35] Mukhia, op cit , pp. 286, 289, 303, fn 124.

[76] This was the case in my own village Barauni (District Begusarai, Bihar) till 1950 when the Permanent Settlement was abolished

[77] Y.B. Singh, "Halikā-kara: Crystallization of a Practice into a Tax", paper (unpublished) presented to the 43rd Session of the Indian History Congress, Kurukshetra, 1982.

[78] *IF*, 2nd edn, pp. 99-100.

[79] The term *utpatsyamāna* would suit this interpretation better, although even *utpadyamāna* means the same thing. I owe this suggestion to Professor R C Pandeya. Palaeographically there is very little difference between the two terms.

[80] *Select Inscriptions*, Bk III, no 16, l. 19; no 62, l. 28.

[81] *SCNI*, pp 164-166.

[82] *IF*, 2nd edn, p 199 with fn. 6.

[83] The passage *paṅktiśaḥ panktiśo bhṛtyaiḥ vinyaset samabhūmike* (verse no. 431) occurs in the context of paddy transplantation in the *Kāśyapīyakṛṣisūkti* ed, Gy. Wojtilla, *Acta Orientalia Academiae Saentiarum Hung*, xxxiii (2), 1979, 209-252. The frequent use of the term *kṛṣivala* for the peasant shows that the text belongs to some paddy producing area either in south India or in some other part of the country, and contains much medieval material. Verse no. 450 speaks of the employment of the classes of agricultural labourers in weeding operations. *tṛṇakoṣṭhan nirasyatha panktiśaḥ paṅktiśaḥ kramāt, bhṛtyavargaiḥ, praty ahaṃ va vairīcchedaḥ prasasyate.* If we look at the survival of the transplantation practice, it would appear that this use of labour was made by the upper caste people in medieval times.

[85] Mukhia, op. cit., pp. 274, 286

[85] This Kali passage in the critical edn of the *Mahābhārata* (III. 188.71) amended by me on the basis of the Gita Press edn reads: *nirviśeṣa janapadā karaviṣṭibhirarditāḥ*. Apparently taxes (*kara*) affected the vaiśyas and forced labour (*viṣṭi*) the śūdras.

[86] I have discussed the Kali problem in some detail in a paper "The Kali Age: A Period of Social Crisis", in S.N. Mukherjee, ed, *India: History and Thought* (Essays in Honour of A L. Basham) Calcutta, 1980. But see my *Śūdras in Ancient India*, 2nd edn, Delhi, 1980, pp 233-239.

[87] In addition to the material presented about the decline of trade in my *IF*, 2nd edn, chs I and III, further evidence appears in B N.S. Yadava, *SCNI*, pp. 270-275. Speaking of early medieval Bengal M.R Tarafdar says: "The period between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries shows distinct signs of the decay of trade and urban centres, a process which must have started earlier", ("Trade and Society in Early Medieval Bengal", *IHR*, vi (January 1978), 282). However in western India trade shows revival in this period (V K. Jain, "Trade and Traders in Western India", Ph D thesis, Delhi University, 1983); so also seems to be the case with south India (Kenneth R. Hall, *Trade and Statecraft in the Age of the Coḷas*. New Delhi, 1980). We postulate decline of trade mainly in the 7th-10th centuries.

[88] Although the decline of urbanism has been sometimes doubted (B D. Chatopadhyaya, "Trade and Urban Centres in Early Medieval North India" *IHR*, i (1974), 203-219) progress in historical archaeology in the Gangetic zone and elsewhere since 1971, coupled with further research in literary texts, confirms what I stated earlier ("Decay of Gangetic Towns in Gupta and Post-Gupta Times", *JIH*, Golden jubilee Volume, 1973, pp 135-150). Almost all Sātavāhana towns decay and disappear after the 3rd century A.D. Professor A.H. Dani informs me of a similar fate of the Kuṣāṇa towns in Pakistan, and the Soviet archaeologist Professor V. Masson tells me that five central Asian urban centres of about 1st-4th century A D. became either villages or castles afterwards. In two Patna University doctoral theses (Om Prakash Prasad, "Towns in Early Medieval Karnataka", 1978, and B.P.N. Pathak, "Society and Culture in Early Bihar", 1983) the phenomenon of decay comes out very clearly. R.N. Nandi convincingly shows that many of these decaying towns were converted into *tīrthas* or places of pilgrimage in early medieval times ("Client, Ritual and Conflict in Early Brahmanical Order", *IHR*, vi, 1979, 80, 100, 103-109). Additional evidence has been collected on the decay of towns, ibid. 74-80).

[89] R.S. Sharma, "Indian Feudalism Retouched" *IHR*, i, (1974), 320-330. For additional evidence regarding paucity of coinage, see M.R. Tarafdar, op cit.

[90] *IF*, 2nd edn, pp 41-42.

[91] In 1214 a temple in Karnataka claimed the land of its neighbours, but the local authorities decided against the temple. S. Settar and G.D. Sontheimer, ed, *Memorial Stones*, Dharwar, 1982, p 303.

[92] R.S. Sharma, "*Rājaśāsana*: Meaning, Scope and Application', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 37th Session, Calicut, 1976.

[93] *IF*, 2nd edn, Delhi, 1980, p 220.

[94] Mukerji and Maity, *Corpus of Bengal Inscriptions*, no 6, l. 18: no 7, l. 19.

[95] *Select Inscriptions*, Bk II, no 61, ll. 22-24.

[96] Ibid. no. 62, ll. 32-34; no. 634, 21-24; no. 67, 24-25.

[97] S. Settar and Gunther D. Sontheimer, op cit., p 223.

[98] His manuscript entitled "Class, State and Family in Early South India" is yet to be published.

[99] D N Jha, *Early Indian Feudalism: A Historiographical Critique*, p 18.

[100] Mukhia, op cit., p 293.

[101] Gy. Wojtilla, ed, *Kāsyapīyakṛṣiśūkti*, op cit., verses 491-492.

[102] Mukhia, op cit. 292. However this statement is qualified by the phrase "change completely", ibid.

[103] Gy. Wojtilla *Kasypīyakṛsisūkti*, pp. 209-252. The usual term for cultivator in this text is *kṛśivala*, which occurs in early medieval texts and inscriptions. Most material in this text probably belongs to medieval times.

[104] Gy. Wojtilla, op cit., verses 167-168. The *ghaṭī-yantra* operated by oxen is considered to be the best, that by men to be worst and that by

elephants to be of the middling quality.

[105] *SCNI*, p. 250.

[106] D M Bose and others, ed, *A Concise History of Science in India*, New Delhi, 1971, p 362.

[107] Ibid. p. 255.

[108] Ibid. pp. 363 64.

[109] Ibid. pp. 358, 361, 365.

[110] Ibid. pp. 356, 361.

[111] Ibid. pp. 358-59.

[112] Ibid. pp. 358-60.

[113] These texts belong to the early centuries of the Christian era. See, R S. Sharma, *Light on Early Indian Society and Economy*, Bombay, 1966, pp. 90-111.

[114] Gy. Wojtilla, op cit., pp. 219-220.

[115] *Trade and Traders in Western India*, Ph. D. thesis, University of Delhi, 1981.

[116] The text was edited by T. Chowdhury in *Journal of Bihar Research Society*, xxxi (1945) and xxxii (1946). The earliest ms. used by him belongs to 1851-52. Composed by Haricaraṇasana the text is based on the *Paryāyaratnamālā* of Mādhavakara (*JBRS*. XXXII, 1945, Introduction. p i). Since it is strikingly indebted to Amara in chapters 22 and 23 (ibid) and since potato and tobacco are not mentioned in it, it seems to be pre-Mughal. The synonyms for iron and other metals are found in ch. (*varga*) 6 (*JBRS*, xxvi, 1945).

[117] Ch. 18 (*JBRS*, xxxi, 1945, 31-33) speaks of 24 types of *simbīśukadhānyagaṇa* (p. 33), but the varieties, when counted, come to nearly 110 types of cereals including wheat, barley, lentils, etc. Ch. 19 (ibid, 33-34) speaks of 10 types of *śālidhānya* (transplanted paddy) and 19 types of *tṛṇaśālidhānya* (untransplanted? paddy), but on counting various types of paddy and allied cereals come to nearly 64.

[118] T.C. Dasgupta, *Aspects of Bengali Society*, Calcutta, 1935, pp. 249-250 quoted in B N.S. Yadava, op cit., pp 258, 305 fn. Yadava has cited several other pieces of evidence, op cit. pp. 251-259.

[119] Mukhia, op cit., p 292.

[120] Yadava, *The Problem of the Emergence of Feudal Relations in Early India*, p. 46, fn 1 draws attention to the position of the serf as stated by E. J. Hobsbawm on the basis of Karl Marx: "The serf, though under the control of the lord, is in fact an economically independent producer", Karl Marx, *Pre-capitalist Economic Formations*, London, 1964, p 42.

8

B.N.S. YADAVA

Problem of the Interaction between Socio-Economic Classes in the Early Medieval Complex

The traditional division of society, in theory as well as in practice, into four hierarchical *varṇas*, along with a number of caste groups mostly included in the fourth *varṇa*, and the broad distinction made between the upper and the lower levels of social structure tended to cover up and inhibit the clear emergence of socio-economic classes in the ancient period of Indian history.[1] In the early medieval period the obscuring forces are found to have acquired greater dimensions, especially with the proliferation of castes.[2] Furthermore, the dichotomy of *dvija* and śūdra in the *varṇa*-divided society began to be complicated in this age. This was on account of the advance of the śūdras[3]—their transformation from slaves and servants into dependent peasants—and the decline of the vaiśya traders and free peasants in the wake of decline of trade and commerce, money economy, and urban life. In the *Āraṇyaka Parva* of the *Mahābhārata* the heightening of this social situation around the fourth century A.D. was viewed as a significant trend making the process of the end of an age (*yugānta*).[4] In course of time this necessitated the readjustment of *varṇa* duties to the changing conditions of

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the age.[5] It can hardly be denied that, *inter alia*, these tendencies, together with the way in which they were viewed by some ancient thinkers, signify the emergence of a different socio-economic formation.[6]

The *sāmanta* system[7] or the feudal complex, which comes into clearer view in the sixth and seventh centuries, and later revealed more than one phase of development, was the most outstanding phenomenon of the early Middle Ages. The essential elements of this complex in the political sphere were greater prevalence of land grants,[8] the emergence of an administrative structure based on the control and possession of land, the fragmentation of political authority, and a sort of lord-vassal relationship which informed the political structure.[9] The essential economic elements, which we find in a more pronounced form in the initial phase extending up to c. A.D. 900-1000, were the decline of trade and commerce and urban life,[10] paucity and irregular, slow circulation of money, the growing agrarian character of society, and the emergence of a closed local economy[11] which acted as the base of the entire complex.[12] The social sphere was marked by the formation of two major classes related to the prevailing mode of production: the landed intermediaries, including a hierarchy of ruling landed aristocracy, and a large body of peasantry which was mostly dependent and improverished.[13] The former swelled as a result of secular and religious land grants, the inclusion of some foreign and indigenous tribal elements in it, and the rise of the military clans of the Rājaputras. The latter also emerged and expanded considerably as a result of the operation of the socio-economic forces noted above, the inclusion of people belonging to the aboriginal tribes after their acculturation, and the explicit or implicit transfer of peasants, artisans, etc., to the donees, along with land grants, as borne out by a number of epigraphic and literary records. All these tendencies and phenomena were interrelated. They did not emerge all of a sudden, and the rudiments of some of them may be traced back to the pre-Gupta period.[15] In fact, without taking into account the stage of transition, we cannot grasp their full significance in the historical perspective.

The dominant class of the *sāmanta* élite and the lesser landed intermediaries, wielding power and authority, emerged with its distinctive character, status symbols, ethics, and style of life.[16]

From the bigger *sāmantas* down to the petty village chiefs, there were many hierarchical grades of the ruling landed aristocracy. However, all the grades did not exist everywhere. The religious landlords constituted a separate section of this class. The feudal ruling élite—*sāmantas*, petty village chiefs, and lesser landholders—began to claim greater rights over land. At the lowest level of the *sāmanta* hierarchy, the phenomenon of village chiefs settled over villages became so common by the ninth century that in his commentary on the *Brahmasūtra*, Śaṅkara compared *dehasvāmya* (lordship of the body) with *grāmasvāmya* (lordship of the village).[17]

In the *Kathākośa-prakaraṇa*[18] (v.s. 1108) of Jineśvara Sūri we find the enumeration of classes and groups, based on the economic factor, in a hierarchical order. It reveals that the ruling landed aristocracy composed of two strata—the paramount rulers and the different grades of feudal élite—actually enjoyed the highest status in society and emerged as a chief socio-economic class[19]. The priests, religious preachers, monks, etc. are regarded here as a separate group. It was an age when landed property acquired special significance. The social status of the expanding landed aristocracy, which could not be confined to one particular *varṇa* or even to the first two upper *varṇas*,[20] clearly shows that the ascriptive lines of the fourfold *varṇa* system, connected with different social, economic, religious and legal privileges and disabilities, began to be cut across when landed property, along with the *sāmanta* relations, emerged in this age as the most tangible basis for the differentiation of social and political status.[22] However, the tendency of validating the *varṇa* status was also continuing to some extent.[23] But these trends were operating in a situation marked by a conflict between the claim for privileges as based on the competence sanctioned by the Dharmaśāstra (*śāstriya sāmarthya*) and the rival claim for the same as based on the actual worldly competence (*laukika sāmarthya*).[24]

The *Kathākośa-prakaraṇa* and some other texts show that there emerged a comparatively small intermediate section composed of rich traders, merchants and usurers, especially in the second phase (eleventh and twelfth centuries) of the early medieval period.[25] Many merchant princes were landlords[26] as well and some of them appear to have joined the *sāmanta* order.[27] But those who were mainly concerned with trade and commerce had to suffer a lot on account of heavy taxes[28] and the rapacity[29] of the ruling chiefs. The *Kathākośa-prakaraṇa*[30] further informs us about the lower social structure which comprised many sections of society—peasants, petty businessmen, artisans, labourers, and the Caṇḍālas and other *antyajas*.[31] The last group of untouchables, occupying the lowest stratum of the social hierarchy, may be viewed as a separate estate. Some pieces of evidence indicate that at least during the first phase of the early medieval period agriculture and industry were, for the most part, not distinctly separate entities, and small-scale, irregular commerce may have been combined, to some extent, with each of them in the closed local economy. This analysis of the social structure by Jineśvara Sūri is quite significant. However, it does not throw much light on the role of the peasantry in the medieval complex, though this becomes evident from many other pieces of evidence.

Peasants, as an important section of society, existed in the ancient period also. But in the relatively closed agrarian set-up characterized by a considerable expansion of the class of ruling landed aristocracy, the toiling peasantry appears to have occupied a definite place. In the seventh century Raviṣeṇa noticed at many places in his *Padma Purāṇa* the harrowing poverty and wretched life of *kṛṣīvalajanāḥ* (the mass of the toiling peasantry).[32] He also pointedly referred to the antithesis between the poverty of the peasants and field labourers (*dhanojjhitāḥ*) and the luxury of the landed aristocracy (*akṣīṇadhanasampannāḥ*.)[33] However, he attributed poverty to the evil deeds of previous births.[34]

In the *Amarakośa* we find four terms for the toiling peasantry: *kṣetrājīvī*, *karṣaka*. *kṛṣīvala* and *kīnāśa*. The *Abhidhānacintāmaṇi*[36] of Hemacandra (twelfth century) omits *kīnāśa* in this context but gives as many as seven terms: *kuṭumbi*, *karṣaka*, *kṣetrī*, *hali*, *kṛṣika kārṣika* and *kṛṣīvala*. In the Dharmaśāstra texts the words *ardhasīrī*,[37] *ārdhika*,[38] *kuṭumbi*,[39] *bhūmikarṣaka*[40], *sīravāhaka*,[41] and *kṣetrika*,[42] are found for the produce-sharing peasants. *Karṣakas*, *kṣetrakaras*[43] *kuṭumbins*,[44] *ārdhikas*,[45] etc. are mentioned in some inscriptions also. The terms *hālika*,[46] or *halavāhaka* were exclusively used for the ploughdrivers who represented the section of field labourers, including the lowest stratum of dependent peasantry. The words *kīnāśa*[47] and *karṣaka* were also sometimes used in the same sense. In earlier times a *kīnāśa* was regarded as a free vaiśya peasant, but during the early medieval period his status declined and he began to be viewed as a śūdra.[48]

The term *karṣaka*, literally meaning the tiller of the soil, was a generic word for the lower peasantry. *Kṛṣīvala* was a term with wider connotation. Sometimes it connoted the well-to-do peasants,[49] but many pieces of evidence[50] indicate that generally it began to be used for the dependent impoverished peasantry, including agricultural labourers.

Inequality prevailed in the economic status of the peasants. There were free peasants to whom landed property descended by right of inheritance. They were considered to be independent with regard to property,[51] though not in relation to the ruler.[52] In a verse of the *Nāradasmṛti*, which has been cited with approval by Lakṣmīdhara in the Vyavahārakāṇḍa[53] of the *Kṛtyakalpataru*, the right of a king to deprive a peasant of his field and house enjoyed even for three generations has, in a way, been recognized. However, in another verse[54] the king has been given the moral advice that he should not adopt such a drastic measure, for the field and house constitute the householder's means of subsistence and basis of residence there. The subjects on their part, being dependent on the king for subsistence,[55] are instructed to obey his command and remain bound to him.

Under the circumstances characterized by the growing claims[56] of greater rights over land by the rulers as well as the landed intermediaries, many of the free peasants may have suffered a corresponding curtailment of their land rights. A number of them may have even been reduced to tenants, having a mere occupancy right or the right to only use the land. The free peasants may also have descended to a lower status on account of impoverishment caused by an increase in the size of the family, indebtedness,[57] etc., or by adventitious factors such as extra-economic coercion, overtaxation, plunder in wars and famine. The grants of villages to individuals and religious institutions, along with the inhabitants thereof, must have sometimes adversely affected the liberty and land rights of the peasants. Then again, many peasant proprietors may have either lost or surrendered their superior land rights to powerful individuals or chiefs, for it was an age when protection[58] had become a serious problem, and the common maxim was: *na hi kulāgatā kasyāpi bhūmiḥ, kintu virabhogyā vasundharā.*[59] Some sources indicate that the majority of the free peasants may have been only petty peasants.[60]

Among the dependent peasants, whose number must have far exceeded that of the free peasants, the most common appear to have been the sharecroppers. That the system of sharecropping was widely prevalent may be inferred from the use of not less than six terms[61] in this age for peasants engaged in this work. Moreover, a separate mixed caste of the *ārdhikas* was conceived by Parāśara[62] (c. A.D. 600-900). At a certain stage in the development of feudalism, this system, known as small-scale peasant tenancy,[63] became common in some regions of Europe too, for instance, in France. In this system land was rented on the condition of payment of a part of the produce, even half of the harvest.

The lowest stratum of dependent peasantry was represented by the ploughdrivers and other field labourers. The ploughdrivers[64] were obliged to work on the field of their masters for the greater part of their time. Dependent peasants must have been connected separately with the rulers and individual landed intermediaries of different grades. Some petty peasants also appear to have rented fields from the landholders and got them tilled by the poorer peasants[65]—sharecroppers or field labourers. There is ample evidence for the prevalence of forced labour and restrictions[66] imposed on the mobility of dependent peassants especially in the first phase of the early medieval period.

Usually the lower peasantry was composed of the śūdras who had emerged mostly as dependent peasants and agricultural labourers. But we find other elements also in the composition of this class. As noticed above, the lower section of the vaiśya agriculturists also tended to accede to this class. The changed connotation of the word *kīnāśa* throws light on this tendency.[67] By the eleventh century such vaiśyas as were considered to be degraded in this manner appear to have lost the right of Vedic study.[68] Numerous people belonging to the aboriginal tribes, which had been assimilated in the social system, became dependent peasants and field labourers. A number of poor brāhmaṇas also appear to have become *karṣakas*.[69] In the *Parāśara Smṛti*[70] agriculture has been recommended for the common kṣatriyas as well. Thus, many of them may have been rank-and-file peasants.[71]

The *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*[72] and the *Nītivākyāmṛta*[73] reveal that śūdra peasants and ploughmen constituted a majority of the population in a village. The *Mahāpurāṇa*[74] of Jinasena (ninth century) also states that a village was largely inhabited by *śūdra-karṣakas* (śūdra peasants). The *Kalpadrukośa*[75] of Keśava, however, explains the term *grāma* as the dwelling-place of *karṣakas*. Thus, it appears that at the lower level too the ascriptive lines of *varṇa* stratification began to be cut across as a result of the impact of socio-economic forces. The great body of the lower peasantry could not be confined to caste limits. All the same the ruling class did make vigorous efforts to enforce caste duties,[76] which was of course conducive to its interest. The different kinds of dues and services secured from the caste groups of the toiling masses were greatly needed to support the closed agrarian set-up. This may be regarded as one of the factors responsible for the tightening of the caste system during the early medieval period.

Without taking into account the tendency of the toiling peasantry emerging as a class cutting across the *varṇa* structure, we cannot fully understand why Somadeva gave an apparently muddled account of the various social sections, each of which had developed a distinct character of its own. Thus, he mentioned brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas, *kṛṣīvalas*, Kirātas, *vaṇiks*, and vaiśyas,[77] though at another place he also described the four traditional *varṇas*.[78] Varāhācārya, however, has simply mentioned the following main sections of the society in course of associating different constellations with each of them: brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas, *kṛṣīvalas*, *vaṇiks*, and Caṇḍals[79] The *Jayalakṣmī* commentary on the *Narapatijayacaryā-svarodaya* (twelfth century) refers to *kārukas*[80] (artisans) also in this context.

The peasantry *vis-a-vis* the ruling landed aristocracy is mentioned in many texts of the early medieval period. Describing the miserable life of the *karṣakas* in his *Padma Purāṇa*, Raviṣeṇa stated that they were greatly oppressed by the ruler, so much so that they could not even support their families.[81] The poor peasant oppressed by the ruler appears as a social type[82] in a work of Kṣemendra (eleventh century). In his *Yukti-kalpataru*,[83] however, Bhoja (eleventh century) advised the rulers and chiefs to protect the peasants (*kṛṣīvalas*) in every village, as they were engaged in agriculture which was the source of all wealth. The *Skanda Purāṇa* makes a sweeping statement that in the Kali age the rulers will oppress their peasants:...*bhūpālāḥ pīḍayiṣyanti karṣukān*.[84] A verse in the *Subhāṣita ratnakośa*[85] reveals that apparently on account of overtaxation and extra-economic coercion by the *bhogapati*, the peasant proprietors in villages were reduced to such straitened circumstances as to find themselves on the verge of being uprooted. The chances for this state of affairs were greater in the small estates of *sāmanta* chiefs and landlords who held land more directly than the kings in their wider territories.

The *Rajataraṅgiṇī* informs us that villages in Kashmir were oppressed on account of forced labour,[86] arbitrary exactions by the rulers and their officers, maladministration, and frequent warfare. The *Lekhapaddhati*[87] shows that sometimes the dependent sharecroppers were required to give as much as two-thirds of the produce of fields to the chief of villages. The fields, grain, cattle, etc., of a peasant who had left his village were taken over by the chiefs. In the Maināmatī songs (twelfth century)[88] also exorbitant taxes imposed by a feudal chief in his estate are said to have led to the ruin of the peasants. The taxation system of the period throws ample light on the plight of the peasantry.

The pointed references to the antithesis between the ruling landed aristocracy and the peasantry, and also to the oppression of the latter by the former, which we find in a number of texts noted above, appear to indicate a degree of realization, even by some contemporary thinkers, of the contradiction between the two major classes of the *sāmanta* complex. The division of the entire society into two opposing camps with high degree of "classness" was not possible under the existing conditions. At one level we come across contradictions[89] giving rise to occasional clashes and struggles between groups or sections of the ruling class, and also the contradiction[90] between the merchants practising usury and the peasantry. But below the surface may be found the antagonistic interests of the major classes of the society, and the social distinctions between them. It is due partly to this and partly the growth of a sense of feudal dignity among the ruling class, which largely held and controlled land, that there developed a sort of disdainful attitude towards the lower peasantry.

In the *Padma Purāṇa*[91] of Raviṣeṇa a man attached to fields and a village has been referred to as a servile creature not fit for Jain *pravrajyā*. In the commentary of Asahāya on the *Nāradasmṛti*[92] a *kīnāśa* has been regarded as an incompetent witness. In his *Nītikalpataru* Kṣemendra considers a *kīnaśa* an unreliable person.[93] In the *Nītivākyāmṛta*[94] the peasants are viewed as simple, yet crooked. In the *Yaśastilaka* a *kīnāśa*[95] has been represented as the very antithesis of the élite. In a medieval Buddhist text the *karaṣakas,* along with a few other social groups—servants, actors, physicians, etc.—are called *nārakaḥ*.[96] According to it, the Buddhas installed by teachers belonging to these groups brought destruction to the ruling king and others.[97] In his *Bhāvaprakāśanam*[98]Śāradātanaya (twelfth-thirteenth century) has recommended *Kṛṣivala kāru* (artisan), Nirgrantha, physician, etc., for the role of *adhamanāyaka* in a drama. A brāhmaṇa who became a *kīnāśa* was placed in the category of people engaged in sinful acts (*pāpakāriṇaḥ*).[99] The gift of a cow to him was deemed as leading to *akṣaya naraka*[100] (enduring hell). A poor brāhmaṇa who worked as a *karṣaka* for a long time was regarded as degraded, and he was likely to lose his chance of getting a *savarṇa* bride.[101] Even those brāhmaṇas who were village priests and thus mainly associated with the peasants began to be regarded as śūdra brāhmaṇas.[102] Some Dharmaśāstra works of the early medieval period began to restrict[103] the scope or place *kalivarjya*[104] restriction on the practice of taking food from the śūdra sharecroppers, etc., which was allowed in earlier times. However, there may also have been some other factors responsible for this attitude, for example, the inclusion of people belonging to the aboriginal tribes as sharecroppers and field labourers.

The same disparaging attitude may be noticed towards the artisans, who have been regarded as *adhama* (low) in the *Kathākośa-prakaraṇa*.[105] The common merchants too were often held in low estimation.[106]

Under the circumstances, it is not surprising that one comes across evidence of some protest, clash and conflict. The epigraphic and literary evidence reveals a wide prevalence of forced labour in the first phase of the early medieval period, mostly in the countryside.[107] According to the *Yaśastilaka*,[108] the oppressed people sometimes protested against forced labour. In a story occurring in the text, a few poor men who were subjected to forced labour eventually lost their lives when they along with others protested against their master who was the minister of a king. The story indicates that the better conscience of society had begun to view forced labour as an evil practice.

The non-mention[109] of *viṣṭi* in many inscriptions belonging to the eleventh and twelfth centuries suggests that the rigours of forced labour decreased owing partly to the redeveloping money economy in that phase, and partly to the growing opposition to it. Forced labour also began to be commuted[110] into payment in cash, as in Kashmir. But we notice at the same time an expansion in the meaning of the term *viṣṭi*[111] which by the twelfth century came to connote not only forced labour, but also the *karmakāra* (labourer) who was subjected to it. Alberuni (*c*.A.D. 1030) would have us believe that people belonging to all castes, except the brāhmaṇas, had not only to pay taxes but also to perform services[112] (*wazaif*) to the ruler. This may indicate that forced labour continued to exist in some regions and was not abolished altogether. On the whole, however, the impact of an expanding money economy was bound to contribute to the loosening of restrictions on the peasants, though, as the literary and epigraphic sources reveal, the tax burden appears to have increased at the same time.

Overburdened by many kinds of dues and services and also by feudal curbs on their mobility, the dependent peasants and ploughmen sometimes escaped, [114] and many of them became mendicants. Sometimes the peasants, hit by famine and oppressed by overtaxation, took to mass desertion.[116] The view of D.D. Kosambi[117] that the caste system may have been instrumental in such desertions does not appear to be wholly tenable, for the population of a village was usually composed of people belonging to more than one caste. Besides, the level of socio-economic development was not such as to lead to the formation of powerful caste organizations which could defend their members from the oppression of the feudal system.[118] However, individual peasants alone or along with their families may in a few cases have escaped with the help of the members of their caste in other villages.[119]

The peasants may have united locally, mostly for their agricultural pursuits, but at times for protesting against oppression or offering resistance to their oppressors. Corporations of peasants with their own rules of conduct are mentioned in the *Bṛhaspati-smṛti*[120] The term *pūga* occurring in the *Nārada-smṛti*[121] has been explained in a commentary as *grāmeyakādi-samūhaḥ*.[122] (corporations or associations[123] of villagers, etc.). The Vyavahārakāṇḍa of the *Kṛtyakalpataru* of Lakṣmīdhara explains the term *śreṇayaḥ* as *ekakarmapravṛttāḥ vaṇikkṛṣīv-lādayaḥ*.[124] This shows that sometimes the peasants were also organized in guilds (*śreṇis*). The commentary of Abhayatilak-agaṇi (thirteenth century) on the *Dvayāśraya* of Hemacandra mentions the armed *śreṇis* of *karṣakas* who used weapons made of wood (*kāṣṭhamayam śastram*).[125] The comments on a verse of Nārada in the *Vivādabhaṅgārṇava* of Jagadnātha indicate that the corporations or guilds may have protested against oppressive dues.[126] In the *Nītivākyāmṛta*[127] there is a general statement that exacting dues often led to *prajopadravam*. A model document in the *Lekhapaddhati* indicates the apprehension of *kṣudropadravādikam*[128] in the villages assigned to chiefs who were required to control them. But such disturbances could have been due to other factors also. The evidence of the *Kathāsaritsāgara*[129] and the *Skanda Purāṇa*[130] indicates that sometimes the unprivileged brāhmaṇas played a considerable role in expressions of protest against the religious donees.

These and a few other pieces of evidence suggest that stray local peasant insurrections may have taken place. In the *Bṛhannāradīya Purāṇa*[131] a leader or chief of the *kīnāśas* is said to have killed people and plundered their property as well as that of temples, apparently without any higher purpose. In the eleventh century Kṣemendra made a sweeping remark that in his age of *yugakṣaya* the poor, with malice towards the property of the rich, were turning violent.[132] The literary evidence clearly shows that poverty was especially associated with the peasants. According to the *Skanda Purāṇa*,[133] in the Kali age the masters will be greatly troubled by the organizations of *bhṛtyas*. The term *bhṛtya*[134] was used for the dependent peasants —sharecroppers, field labourers, etc.

However, there are not many historical instances of actual peasant uprisings. The abortive revolt[135] of the Kaivartas in eastern Bengal, who were subjected to exorbitant taxes and deprived of their plots of land which they had enjoyed as service tenures, has been described by Sandhyākara Nandī in his *Rāmacarita*.[136] The revolt, most probably a formidable peasant uprising directed against the Pālas, was led by Bhīma against Rāmapāla. In order to put it down the king had to mobilize the resources of his vassals also.

The *Rājataraṅgiṇī* shows that some of the Ḍāmara revolts in Kashmir were essentially in the nature of a peasant movement. The Ḍāmaras have been described as armed peasants[137] who took delight in upheavals against the king.[138] In a famine during the reign of Sussala the Ḍāmaras carried away the agricultural produce reducing the *sāmantas* to sore straits.[139] They were a source of trouble both for the king and the *sāmantas*. The policy[140] of the kings of Kashmir was not to let the peasants in villages possess grain and bullocks in excess of their bare requirements, for they feared that the latter would become terrible just within a year and violate the royal authority. In spite of this, the Ḍāmara revolts in Kashmir, though promptly suppressed, became quite frequent. In course of time, however, the peasant movement in Kashmir became reconciled to the feudal set-up when Ḍāmara leaders acquired a status akin to the *sāmanta* chiefs. This appears a strange development, but this is what actually happened in the later Middle Ages in some other countries too, for example in Russia and China. There too the leaders of peasant revolts tended to degenerate into ordinary feudal lords.[141]

The epigraphic evidence on the point is, however, quite vague and meagre. An inscription[142] (A.D. 1173) recovered from the Ghazipur district of Uttar Pradesh records an ordinance issued by the landholders in village Lāhaḍapura (modern Barahpur) in the Gāhaḍavāla kingdom in an extremely abnormal situation created by the turbulent people who appear to have been mostly peasants. It says that any person found guilty of scandalizing the framers of the ordinance (*parivāda*), plunder (*luṇṭanam*), rebellion (*droha*), and seizure of cattle would be killed at sight (*cakṣurvadha*), and his entire property would be confiscated, while his abettor would be expelled from the village and his house demolished. An inscription[143] (A.D. 1230) of south India furnishes an example of refusal by the farmers to obey the royal order for converting their village into a freehold. For this disobedience, however, they were punished severely. At times, the attempt to transfer communal property was also resisted by the villagers.[144] In some regions, where labour was not scarce, peasants were sometimes evicted.[145]

The peasant movements in the East have not been as thoroughly studied as those in Europe. While peasant movements in Europe during the Middle Ages reached a scale equalled neither earlier nor later,[146] in India the ingrained belief in the doctrine of *karman*, the hold of religiosity, the disunity brought about by the caste system, which was being perpetuated under the existing circumstances, and above all the feudal conditions tended to reduce to the minimum the possibility of the outbreak of widespread peasant wars waged with tenacity of purpose. However, under the influence of *grāmyadharma*,[147] which was based on localism and material interests, the common people did not always seriously heed the dictates of the Dharmaśāstra. Then again, in the second phase of the early medieval period, some enlightened persons, moved by humanitarian considerations, tried to drive home to the dependent peasants and agricultural labourers the truth that their endeavour to ameliorate their conditions by acquiescing in the existing set-up was altogether futile.[148] Stray local peasant uprisings, therefore, could not but have taken place under the existing conditions. However, they appear to have been invariably suppressed; sometimes they even changed their character, as in Kashmir. Anyway, even in Europe the peasant uprisings were significant not so much in themselves as in the role they played in the historical process.

As in the middle Ages in some other countries, the protests and revolts of the oppressed people may be found, to some extent, to have been clothed in the garb of religion. A verse in the *Skanda Purāṇa*[149] indicates that at times the peasants and artisans in the estates of the religious donees resorted to the social ideology of Jainism and other heretical religions and acted in violation of the rights conferred on landholders by the land grants. The tāntric religion and the Bhakti movement, which became prominent in the early Middle Ages, appear to have been initially connected with an attempt at reconciliation[150] and integration. In course of time, however, some tāntric currents, especially within the fold of later Buddhism, appear to have become associated, to a considerable extent, with the people belonging to the lower sections of society, who used them for furthering their own interests.[151] The keen rivalry between Hinduism and Tāntric Buddhism could hardly have become so deepened as to verge on hostility without any social conflict being invovled in it.[152] The Tāntric Dharma cult,[153] which prevailed in this age among the lower sections of the common people in some regions of Bengal and Orissa, clearly reflects the conflict between the landed aristorcracy and the oppressed people. Considerable significance attaches to the Sahajayāna movement of the Siddhas, who raised their voice of revolt against the inequities and disparities of the existing social organization, criticized the higher religions, rejected the externals of religion and undue otherworldliness, and used the Apabhraṁśa language of the common people.[154] The list of the eighty-four Siddhas bears out the leading role of merchants, artisans and the followers of lowly occupations in this religious movement.

With the development of industry, trade, money economy and urban life in the feudal complex during the second phase of the early medieval period (eleventh and twelfth centuries), merchants, artisans and craftsmen began to play a significant role in society. They were also usually subjected to an almost oppressive system of tolls, taxes, and feudal restraints, and held in low estimation. These people, along with a group of socially and economically underprivileged or unprivileged brāhmaṇas, appear to have come to the forefront of the movements staged under the banner of religion. Peasants[155] are also found to have been associated with them. This phenomenon is more clearly noticed in the case of the Liṅgāyata system of Śaivism which came into prominence in the twelfth century.

The Liṅgāyata system had a predominantly peasant adherence[156] with massive hagiolatry and traditionalism. However, the traders (Banjigs) began to figure more prominently than the peasants among the four groups of the true

Liṅgāyatas.[157] The revolutionary social and religious ideas of this sect were religious equality of all men and women, remarriage of widows, and the rejection of the Vedic ritual, including the ceremony of the sacred thread. It came into existence under the leadership[158] of a body of brāhmaṇas, the chief among whom was Basava, who gave it a decidedly revolutionary[159] character.

These religious movements were viewed with disfavour[160] by the dominant section of the ruling class. Thus, the artisans and craftsmen—goldsmith, ironsmith, carpenter, tailor, oilman, barber, etc.—who appear to have resorted to struggle under the banner of the Liṅgāyata or Vīraśaiva movement,[161] on account of their antagonistic interests, were degraded to the status of *antyajas* by Hemādri[162] in the thirteenth century. In course of time, however, the edge was taken off[163] these religious movements by the ideologies of reconciliation, attempts at appropriation and synthesis, and by circumscribing some of them within caste limits during the later medieval period. At last they yielded to or rather were overpowered by the system they tried to oppose. In fact, when no radical changes had taken place in the social and economic structure, it could not have been otherwise.[164]

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1] For class formation in the early ancient period of Indian history, see R.S. Sharma, "Class Formation and Its Material Basis in the Upper Gangetic Basin (*c*. 1000-500 B C)", *IHR*, ii, no. 1, 1-13.

[2] *SCNI*, chapter I.

[3] R.S. Sharma, *Social Changes in Early Medieval India* (Delhi, 1969), p. 11.

[4] *antyā madhyā bhaviṣyanti madhyāścāntāvasāyinaḥ, īdṛso bhavitā loko yugānte paryupasthite*, 188·19 (Critical edition, Poona). I owe this reference to my colleague Mr R.K. Dwivedi. For the tendency to identify the poorer vaiśyas with the śūdras in the early Smṛtis, see S. Bhattacharya, "The Rise of the Vaiśyas in the Post-Vedic Period", *South Asian Review*, vii, no. 1, 50.

[5] *SCNI*, chapter I, p. 9ff.

[6] Sharma, *Social Changes in Early Medieval India*; "Class Formation", *IHR*, ii, no. 1, 1-13.

[7] *SCNI*, chapter III.

[8] *IF*, chapter I.

[9] *SCNI*, op. cit.

[10] The decline of trade and commerce and the growing agrarian character of society may also be inferred from the changing attitude of the people in that age. The *Pañcatantra*, which breathes the atmosphere of the earlier period, regarded trade and commerce as the most lucrative profession (*na manye vāṇijyāt kimapi paramaṃ vartanamiha*, ibid. ed, M.R. Kale. 2nd edn (Delhi, 1969), p. 4, v. 11). But the *Nītivākyāmṛta* (8.3) of Somadeva (tenth century) gives preference to agriculture (*tasya khalu saṃsārasukhaṃ yasya kṛṣiḥ*...,). In the *Kṛṣiparāśara* also we find the same idea (ibid. Calcutta, 1960, p. 1, v. 3). The hazards of long-distance trade are specifically mentioned in a number of texts of the early medieval period; see for example, *Nītivākyāmṛta* 8.11, *Lekhapaddhati*, p. 55. In a general way, agriculture was sometimes viewed as the common duty (*sāmānyadharma*) of all the *varṇas* in the early medieval period (*Vṛddha-Hārīta*, 7.189). The increased agrarian character of society and the expansion of the section of dependent peasantry are also revealed by the definitions of *janapada* in the *Kāmandakīya-nītisāra* (4.52), an earlier text, and in the *Nītivākyāmṛta* (19.8), as *sūdra-kāru-vaṇikprāyo mahārambhaḥ kṛṣīvalaḥ* and *śreṇiśūdrakarṣakaprāya* respectively. The change in the latter definition is significant in this context. However, the cities and towns did not disappear altogether. B.D. Chattopadhyaya in the article on "Trade and Urban Centres of Early Medieval North India", *IHR*, i, no. 2, 203-19, has thrown valuable light on these. But at the same time there is ample evidence to conclude that the role of usury also increased among the merchants and traders in the early medieval period.

[11] The Thana plate (Śaka 970) of Mummuṇirāja shows that sometimes weights and measures also varied from village to village (*grāmamāna*), *EI*, xxxviii, 158, l. 115. But the local economy marked by self-sufficiency did not amount to villages having been totally cut off from towns and cities: cf. L. Gopal, Economic Self-sufficiency in Ancient Indian Villages", *Umesha Mishra Commemoration Volume* (Allahabad, 1970), p. 767.

[12] *SCNI*, chapter III.

[13] Ibid. chapters I, III.

[14] *IF*, p. 231 ff.; B.N.S. Yadava, "Immobility and Subjection of Indian Peasantry in Early Medieval Complex", *IHR*, i, no. 1, 18-27.

[15] B N.S. Yadava, "Some Aspects of the Changing Order in India during the Śaka-Kuṣāṇa Age", *Kuṣāṇa Studies*, ed, G R Sharma (Allahabad, 1968), p. 79ff.

[16] *SCNI*, chapters III, IV.

[17] *grāmasvāmya-nivṛttivat dehasvāmya-nivṛtyā*, Śaṅkara on the *Brahmasūtra*, 2.3.13.20. See also the commentary of Abhayatilakagaṇi on the *Dvayāśraya* of Hemacandra, *grāmabhūmisvāmitvādgrāma-patayo bhāgaṃ gṛhṇanti* (III v. 2).

[18] Bombay, 1949, pp. 115 (text), 116f (Introduction).

[19] The high royal officers also appear to have been included in this class.

[20] For this, however, there are many other pieces of evidence.

[21] However, the upper strata of the first two *varṇas* had come closer to each other in that age, *SCNI*, p. 30.

[22] Sharma, *Social Changes in Early Medieval India*, p 6ff.; *SCNI*, pp. 151, 153, 174.

[23] *Āraṇyaka Parva* of the *Mahābhārata* (Critical edition), 206, 12.

[24] Śaṅkara on the *Brahmasūtra*, 1.3.9.34ff.

[25] *SCNI*, p. 284f.

[26] Ibid. p. 285.

[27] Ibid

[28] Ibid. p. 288ff.

[29] Ibid. pp. 273, 278.

[30] P. 115.

[31] V. Jha has rightly pointed out that the ranks of untouchables swelled considerably with the accession of several new castes in the early medieval period, "Stages in the History of Untouchables", *IHR*, ii, no. 1, 31.

[32] *Padma P.*, 11. 350.

[33] Ibid. 31. 70ff.

[34] Ibid. 31. 76; 33. 61f.

[35] II.9.6.

[36] III.554.

[37] *Yājñavalkya*, Ācāra, v. 166; Medhātithi on *Manu*. IV.253.

[38] Medhātithi on *Manu*, IV.253; *Parāśara-Mādhavaḥ*, Prāyaścittakāṇḍa, 11.24; also *Lekhapaddhati*, p 18f.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Medhātithi on *Manu*, IV. 253.

[41] *Bṛhaspati*, XV. 13, cited in the Vyavahārakāṇḍa of *Kṛtyakalpataru* by Lakṣmīdhara (twelfth century), p. 386.

[42] Haradatta on *Gautama Dharmasūtra*, VIII. 6. In the *Manusmṛti* verse, cited by Haradatta, this term has been used in place of *ārdhika*.

[43] *EI*, xxx, 258, 263.

[44] Ibid. pp. 4, 27, 277; D C. Sircar, *Indian Epigraphical Glossary* (Delhi, 1966), p. 169.

[45] *EI*, i, no. 1, 1.39; Sircar, op. cit , p. 27.

[46] *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, IV. 226.

[47] Dānakāṇḍa of *Kṛtyakalpataru* by Lakṣmīdhara, p. 170; *Vivādaratnākara* of Caṇḍeśvara, p. 158.

[48] *SCNI*, p. 41.

[49] *susamṛddhakṛṣivalaḥ*, *Mārkaṇḍeya P.* cited in the Dānakāṇḍa of Lakṣmīdhara, p. 90.

[50] *pāyaṃ parassa dhar.nam bhakkhanti kisīvalā. . .*, *Śrāddhapratikramaṇa-sūtravṛtti*, cited in the *Pāiasad-damahaṇṇao*, p. 246.

[51] *Nāradasmṛti*, tr., J. Jolly, Sacred Books of the East, xxxiii

(Oxford, 1889), 51; Nārada cited in the Vyavahārakāṇḍa of Lakṣmīdhara, p. 274.

[52] Ibid.

[53] P. 459; also p. 450.

[54] Ibid. p. 460.

[55] *Nāradīya-Manusaṃhitā*, ed, K.S. Sastri, Trivandrum Sanskrit Series, no. xcvii (Trivandrum, 1929), 18 23.

[56] *SCNI*, p. 250 ff.

[57] R S. Sharma, "Usury in Early Medieval India (A.D. 400-1200)", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, viii, no. 1 (October 1965), 56ff.

[58] *SCNI*, p. 148

[59] *Nītivākyāmṛta*, 29.61.

[60] Cf. *Hindī Kāvyadhārā*, ed, Rahula Sankrityayana (Allahabad, 1945), pp. 315, 317.

[61] Supra.

[62] *Parāśara-Mādhavaḥ*, Prāyaścittakāṇḍa, 11.24.

[63] D K. Mitropolsky, Y.A. Zubritsky and V.L. Kerov, *An Outline of Social Development*, pt i, tr. from Russian by Fainna Glagoleva (Moscow, n d), 161. However, the wide prevalence of share-cropping and short-term leases in the West was in course of the disintegration of serfdom; cf. Perry Anderson, *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism* (London, 1975) p. 209.

[64] The ploughmen attached to the soil have been regarded as full-fledged serfs; cf. *IF*, p. 57.

[65] Vyāsa, cited in the Vyavahārakāṇḍa, p. 461.

[66] Yadava, "Immobility and Subjection of Indian Peasantry in Early Medieval Complex", *IHR*, i, no. 1, 18ff.

[67] *SCNI*, p. 41.

[68] *Alberuni's India*, tr., E.C. Sachau, ii (London, 1888), 136.

[69] Infra.

[70] Ācārakāṇḍa, 2 13.

[71] For a common kṣatriya cultivator, see *EI*, i, 154.

[72] Cited in the Dānakāṇḍa of Lakṣmīdhara, p. 90.

[73] 19.8.

[74] 17.164.

[75] *grāmaḥ karṣukavāsabhūḥ*, *Kalpadrukośa* (Baroda, 1928), p. 9.

[76] *SCNI*, p. 4ff.

[77] *Nītivākyāmṛta*, 7.32-4, 38f.

[78] Ibid. 7.5ff.

[79] Varāhācārya, cited in the *Narapatijayacaryā-svarodaya* (Kasi, v s. 1962), p. 104.

[80] Ibid.

[81] *Padma P.*, 1.174.

[82] *pīḍanīyasya bhūbhujā*, *Darpadalana*, 2 53.

[83] P.6.

[84] *Skanda P.*, Nāgara-khaṇḍa, 6.27 96.

[85] 35.28.

[86] In the second phase of the early medieval period, however, it began to be commuted into payment in cash.

[87] P. 18f.

[88] *JASB*, xlvii, 135ff.

[89] *SCNI*, chapters I-III.

[90] For example Śaṅkara on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 1.4.10.

[91] *grāmakṣetrādisaktasya pravrajyā kā hatātmanaḥ*, *Padma P*., iii (Kasi, 1960), 295, v. 231.

[92] I.181.

[93] *na jātu pratyayaḥ kāryaḥ kīnāśoktau kathañcana*, *Nītikalpataru* (Poona, 1956), p. 147.

[94] 7.34.

[95] Bombay, 1916, 3.216. But the term *kīnāśa* may also mean here Yama or a miser.

[96] *Ācārya-kripā-samuccaya*, in *Buddhist Studies in India*, ed, R.C. Pandeya (Delhi, 1975) p. 136.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Bombay, 1930, p. 277.

[99] Verses of a late section of the *Mahābhārata*, cited in the Dānakāṇḍa of Lakṣmīdhara, p. 170f. The word *kiṇāśa* has been explained here as *halavāhaka* (ploughdriver).

[100] Ibid. However, this appears to be an extreme view.

[101] Gṛhasthakāṇḍa of Lakṣmīdhara, pp. 106, 111. For the existing caste groups of brāhmaṇas, degraded on account of their being cultivators, see J N. Bhattacharya, *Hindu Castes and Sects* (Reprint, Calcutta, 1969), p. 104.

[102] *Mitākṣarā* (Sacred Books of the Hindus Series), p. 210. According to J N. Bhattacharya, the caste groups of degraded brāhmaṇas known as *varṇa* brāhmaṇas, who are generally very poor and minister to the śūdra castes of peasants (Kunbis, etc) and artisans, and also outcastes, have been noticed in modern times in many regions of India. op. cit , p. 99ff. In Europe, the plebian part of the clergy stood close enough to the life of the masses. The lower clergy, consisting of rural and urban preachers, provided the mass movement of the Middle Ages with theorists and ideologists, F. Engels, *The Peasant War in Germany* (Moscow, 1974), p. 34 The evidence cited above and a few others may indicate that this tendency was operating in some measure in India also.

[103] Aparārka on *Yājñavalkya*, I. 168; Haradatta on *Gautama Dharmasūtra*, XVII. 6.

[104] *Smṛticandrikā*, I. 31.

[105] P. 115.

[106] *Nītivākyāmṛta*, 8.17. The common merchant was equated with a thief (*paśyatoharaḥ*). See also *Kalāvilāsa* of Kṣemendra, 2 4.

[107] The expression *na vaiṣṭikam* has been used in the context of *nagara-parīhāra* by Śaṅkha-Likhita; cf. Vyavahārakāṇḍa of Lakṣmīdhara p. 804.

[108] P. 456.

[109] *IF*, p. 243.

[110] *Rājataraṅgiṇi*, V. 172ff; VII. 1088.

[111] *Vaījayanti* of Yādavaprakāśa, ed, G. Oppert (Madras, 1893), p. 140, l. 109; Rājadharmakāṇḍa of the *Kṛtyakalpataru*, p. 94; *Abhidhānacintāmaṇi*, 2 101 (*viṣṭīḥ karmakare...*). Sometimes the term began to be explained only in the latter sense, for example, *viṣṭih karmakaraḥ*. *Vivādaratnākara* of Caṇḍeśvara, p. 662.

[112] *Alberuni's India*, tr., Sachau, ii, 132. However, in actual practice the common brāhmaṇas also were compelled to perform forced labour (*Bhāgavata P.*, V. 10 1ff).

[113] *Alberuni's India*, edited in the Arabic original by Sachau (Leipzig, 1925), p. 318. For the various meanings of the term see A. Elias, *Modern Dictionary: Arabic-English* (Cairo, 1922), p. 673. The term *wazaif* in Arabic is of wide connotation. In the present context, it means services which the common people had to perform in addition to the payment of taxes (*darāib*). Here the obligation to render *wazaif* to the ruler clearly appears to have included labour-service in the nature of forced labour, which the people belonging to the lower section of society may have been required to perform. I owe this piece of information to Dr M. Rafiq and Dr. G. Murtaza of the University of Allahabad.

[114] Vyavahārakāṇḍa, pp. 402, 414; *Lekhapaddhati*, p. 19; *SCNI*, pp. 168, 170.

[115] *SCNI*, p. 45. Some of them may have gone to cities also.

[116] *Bṛhannāradīya P.*, 38 87.

[117] *The Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in Historical Outline* (London, 1965), p 51f.

[118] It was only much later that the caste organizations of artisans, in spite of the reactionary element of the caste system, are found to have waged battle for privileges in the feudal system of social relations, A.I. Chicherov. *India : Economic Development in the 16th-18th Centuries* (Moscow, 1971), p. 85.

[119] According to R. S. Sharma, the economic conditions and political organization were basically the same everywhere, and mass desertion, therefore, may have been quite rare, *IF*, p. 269.

[120] I.74; XIII. 26-33.

[121] XIII. 22.

[122] Cited in the Vyavahārakāṇḍa, p. 422, fn. 1.

[123] Such associations, however, may also have been of a general character.

[124] Vyavahārakāṇḍa, p. 20.

[125] On *Dvayāśraya*, 4.52. The rulers, however, did not tolerate the wearing of arms by corporations (*gaṇas*) without reason (*Nārada*, XIII. 5, cited ih Vyavahārakāṇḍa, p. 426).

[126] *vayam sarve rājñe prajānāṃ karadānaṃ vārayāma*, *Vivādabhaṅgārṇavaḥ*, 3·3·28; Vyavahārakāṇḍa, p. 426, fn. 7. A record of the time of the Cōḷas informs us that the people of Mannāraguḍi complained: "It has become difficult for us to sustain ourselves on account of the arbitrary imposts exacted by several persons", K.A.N. Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, ii, pt i, 343.

[127] XIX. 14.

[128] *kṣudropadravādikaṃ rakṣaṇīyam, Lekhapaddhati*, p. 7. The danger to land grants from below is indicated in a sixth century inscription from the district of Gaya, *IF*, p. 63.

[129] Tr., C.H. Tawney, Indian Reprint, ii (Delhi, 1968), 59.

[130] 3.2. 38.61.

[131] 35. 18ff. I owe this reference to my colleague Dr S.N. Roy.

[132] *raudraḥ kṣudratayā paradhanadrohī daridro janaḥ, Daśāvatāracarita*, I. 30.

[133] *svāmino bhṛtyavargaiśca, Skanda P.*, Nāgara-khaṇḍa, 6.27.74.

[134] Vyavahārakāṇḍa, p. 400ff.

[135] *IF*, p. 208.

[136] II. 39-42.

[137] *śastriṇaḥ karṣakaprāya nagaropāntaḍāmarāḥ, Rajataraṅgiṇi*, VIII. 709.

[138] This has been stated in connection with the description of events in the reign of Sussala in the first half of the twelfth century.

[139] *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, VIII. 1207f.

[140] Ibid. IV. 347f.

[141] M. Seleznyov in *Historical Materialism* (Moscow, 1968), p. 139.

[142] *EI*, xxxii, no. 36.

[143] *Mysore Archaeological Survey Reports* (1936), p. 84, cited by R.N. Nandi, "Origin of the Vīraśaiva Movement", *IHR*, ii, no. 1, 43.

[144] Ibid.

[145] Ibid.

[146] N. I. Konrad, *West-East: Inseparable Twain* (Moscow, 1967), p. 58.

[147] *grāmyo' śrutaśāstrārtha-janākīrṇa-desocito dharmaḥ*, commentary of Abhinavagupta on the *Nāṭyasāśtra* of Bharata, 1.9; see also the comments on 1.11. and 1.12.

[148] *nisargavandhyāsu phalāsayā ye kurvanti sevāsu sadā prayatnam, kṛṣipravṛttiāḥ śaśaśṛṅgakoṭyā khananti mūrkhāḥ khalu khasthalīṃ te*, Kṣemendra, *Sevya-sevakopadeśa*, 29.

[149] 3.2.38.60.

[150] R S. Sharma, "Material Milieu of Tantricism", *Indian Society: Historical Probings (In Memory of D.D. Kosambi)* ed, R S. Sharma and V. Jha (New Delhi, 1974), p. 189. According to Sharma, tāntricism was the ultimate product of the brāhmaṇical colonization of the tribal area through the process of land grants. The general tāntric practices, however, were widely diffused.

[151] *SCNI*, pp. 376f, 379f.

[152] Ibid. p. 376f.

[153] B K. Sarkar, *The Folk Element in Hindu Culture* (London, 1917), pp. 221, 227; S.B. Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults*, 2nd edn (Calcutta, 1962), pp. xxxix, 261 Some valuable light has recently been thrown on the proletarian cults and rituals of Bengal in the medieval period in N.N. Bhattacharyya, *Ancient Indian Rituals and Their Social Contents* (Delhi, 1975), chapter VIII.

[154] *SCNI*, p. 380f.

[155] The condition of the peasants also began to improve in the wake of the expansion of money economy and trade. See *Daśāvatāracarita* of Kṣemendra, 1.29 (*kṛṣi-vaṇik-kriyayā-kṛtārthaḥ*).

[156] Max Weber, *The Relig‚on of India*, tr. and ed, H.H. Gerth and D. Martindale (Glencoe, Illinois, 1958), p. 305.

[157] R. G. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religious Systems* (Poona, 1929), p. 138. The Vīraśaiva movement also represented the economic interests of artisans and craftsmen, Nandi, op. cit., p.42f

[158] Bhandarkar, op. cit., p. 139. According to the generally accepted view, the fonnder of the tradition of the eighty-four Siddhas was also a brāhmaṇa named Saraha, who became a voluntary outcaste, *SCNI*, p. 31.

[159] Bhandarkar, op. cit , p. 134

[160] For the attitude towards tāntricism, see R. C. Hazra, *Studies in the Upapurāṇas*, ii (Calcutta, 1963), 461. The Liṅgāyata teacher Basava was viewed as an axe to the social structure based on the caste system, *Basava-purāṇa*,, *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1968), p. 67.

[161] Nandi, op. cit , p. 33.

[162] *Caturvargacintāmaṇi*, Prāyascitta-khaṇḍa, p. 998.

[163] *SCNI*, p. 375ff.

[164] Cf. Sharma, *Social Changes in Early Medieval India*, p. 19.

9

M.R. TARAFDAR

Trade and Society in Medieval Bengal

A significant socio-economic transformation took place in India after the decline and fall of the Gupta empire. It showed changes in the form of decline of trade and urban centres, gradually leading to the replacement of money economy by what may be termed natural economy. In the whole process land grants assumed an institutionalized form in different parts of India. Scholars working on certain aspects of the economic history of ancient and early medieval India have used the expression "Indian feudalism" to elucidate this historical process. While D.D. Kosambi and R.S. Sharma have applied the hypothesis to an all-India context, Niharranjan Ray has adhered to similar postulations for the purpose of explaining economic changes in pre-Muslim Bengal.[1] The writers dealing with the all-India scene generally regard the growth of closed village economy as an essential element in the situation. N. Ray does not put much emphasis on such a formation; nor is he particular about the use of the term "feudalism". But an analysis of his arguments shows that the growth of feudalism forms the central theme of his thesis with which the concept of the formation of self-contained village units is also closely associated. Emphasis has also been put on the paucity or

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absence of coinage resulting from the decline of long-distance trade and urban centres. While the hypothesis about the growth of feudalism seems to have a solid basis, investigations carried out within regional limits are likely to reveal remarkable variations in the process of this socio-economic formation. The history of coinage and trade in pre-Muslim south-east Bengal, if studied in contrast with that of north and south-west of the same period, will perhaps illustrate this point. The variations seem to have been caused by such factors as trade routes sustained by the river system of south-eastern Bengal, the capacity of the region to yield marketable commodities to meet local and international demand, commercially active urban centres and a bureaucratic structure necessary for maintaining the economy built on the basis of agriculture, industry and trade. It is not, however, asserted that each one of these factors constituted an indispensable variable in the process of the economic formation indicated above.

The lack of a currency in the long Pāla period has been regarded as "an intriguing problem".[2] It follows from N. Ray's arguments that natural economy characterized the life of Bengal during Pāla and Sena rule. Only a few specimens of copper and silver coins have been attributed to the Pāla period on very uncertain ground and the terms *purāṇa* and *kapardaka-purāṇa* obtaining in the epigraphic records of the Sena kings are very often explained as indicating two coin-denominations.[3] But the explanation seems to be unsatisfactory; for, not a single specimen of these types of coins has been discovered up till now. The absence of a metallic currency in the country must have been due, in a large measure, to the decline of trade and industrial production resulting in the dependence of a vast number of people on land.

To this situation, however, south-east Bengal presented a remarkable contrast. The discovery of more than 350 coins[4] at the different levels of excavations in the Mainamati-Lalmai hills, representing the Gupta and post-Gupta phases of numismatics, clearly indicates that the region had at least a fluctuating money economy. It is thus necessary to modify the theory of the total absence of a monetary system resulting in the use of cowries as the only medium of exchange in Bengal. The country shared in the Gupta coinage which had preserved its metallic purity sustained by an international trade. In the post-Gupta period some of the local rulers issued what is generally known as the Imitation Gupta type of coins. While conforming to the Gupta numismatic traditions, these pieces show progressive debasement of metal and stylistic degeneration. Till recently it was believed that these Imitation Gupta coins were struck within the period of the sixth and seventh centuries and that the only metal used for minting them was gold.[5] Mainamati finds indicate that the Imitation phase of Bengal coinage extended over a longer period and that it included copper and silver issues as well.[6] A remarkable gold issue belonging to the Imitation Gupta Archer type clearly shows that the Imperial tradition of coinage was continued in south-east Bengal in the eighth century presumably under the Deva dynasty.[7] The Bull and Triglyph type, which includes the majority of the Mainamati silver coins, is said to have dated from the eighth and ninth centuries. It has also been suggested that these coins, bearing resemblance to some coins of ancient Arakan, were issued by the Candra rulers,[8] who reigned in the Harikela-Samataṭa-Vaṅga region in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Those who assign these pieces to the eighth-ninth century period[9] obviously base their assumption on the archaeological stratification revealed by recent excavations at Salvana *Vihara* on the Lalmai ridge. Attempts at periodization of finds made on the basis on the levels of excavations may not be always exact and accurate, for even carbon-dating cannot avoid uncertainties in this respect. Before fixing the date of these coins, it is necessary to take into consideration not only archaeological stratigraphy, but also the numismatic traditions prevailing in south-east Bengal and the adjacent regions, the comparative weakness or strength of the reigning dynasties together with that of the bureaucracy on which they had to depend for the purpose of maintaining trade relations and agrarian forms of economy, and the relevant pieces of information culled from numismatic, epigraphic and literary sources, which indicate connections between dynasties. The unique gold coin from the period III level of Lalmai excavations, showing perfection of motifs and reading *śri-vaṅgāla-mṛgāṅkasya* on the obverse, was a prototype to which other pieces struck in the eighth century and perhaps also ninth must have conformed. As the coin belongs to the Imitation Gupta Archer type, it can be presumed that the Deva rulers continued to preserve Imperial numismatic traditions quite tenaciously. Because of this conservative nature of numismatics, it seems difficult to accommodate the Bull and Triglyph type within the eighth-ninth century period unless we presume a violent departure from deep-rooted traditions. The rarity of this gold coin and debased Bull and Triglyph type of gold coins[10] perhaps demonstrates that gold was overvalued so that they had to be replaced by the silver issues of the latter type found in profusion at the Lalmai hills. It is reasonable to suppose that the new type of coins were introduced by the Candra rulers who might have originally come from Arakan. As they were newcomers to this country, they were not expected to have any fascination for the local traditions of coinage, and had reasons to copy the numismatic motifs and designs obtaining in their original homeland.[11] As the Bull and Triglyph type of coins attributed to the Candra rulers of south-east Bengal bear striking resemblance to a particular variety of coins issued by the Candra kings of Arakan (788-957), the assumption grows into certainty. The time-gap shown by the difference in details and the degeneration of motifs of the Bull and Triglyph type of silver coins and their distribution over an extensive region including Sylhet, Comilla and Rajshahi, together with the territorial extent and long duration of the Candra kingdom and the comparative political stability enjoyed by it, seem to indicate indirect association of these finds with the Candra dynasty which had built up a stable bureaucracy, as attested by the available epigraphic records. But the problem of dating these coins does not materially affect the hypothesis in this paper. Variations in dating may lengthen or shorten the period of the total absence of coins in Bengal prior to the introduction of Muslim rule in eastern India. The phase of discontinuity in the history of coinage is significant for the present purpose.

After this resumé of the position of coinage in Bengal it can be stated that the rulers of the south-east region issued coins in the period from the sixth century to about the eleventh century, while the Pālas and the Senas, who were ruling over northern and south-western Bengal and also over the regions adjacent to it, did not perhaps have the necessity of having a standard currency. Thus the situations represented by the numismatic records indicate certain significant historical processes. Bengal in the Gupta period had trade relations with the West, which seem to have been seriously dislocated with the break-up of the Roman empire and the system of maritime commerce it had built up. This phenomenon must have led to the decline of industrial production, urban centres and currency and greatly changed the economic base of the society.[12] Perhaps a standard currency was no longer needed for measuring the prices of commodities in terms of money, for trade by barter or through the medium of cowries became the usual practice in the country where foreign trade was either non-existent or negligible and the society had been wholly based on agriculture.

South-east Bengal had altogether a different story to tell. The regional rulers felt the necessity of maintaining a metallic currency obviously for the purpose of catering to the economic needs of the country. The gold coin of the last Abbasid Caliph, Musta'ṣim bi'llāh (1242-58), together with a number of early Abbasid silver coins[13] found at the upper level of period III of the excavation site at Kutila Mura in Mainamati, indicate contact of the region with Arab trade. Once it is proved that south-east Bengal represented by the political, religious and cultural centres of Mainamati had trade relations with the Arabs, it may not be difficult to explain the continuous existence of a metallic currency extending over centuries before the Muslim conquest. The Gupta gold coins discovered along with the Imitation type of coins at the period III level of excavations clearly point to the adequate political and commercial importance of the Mainamati-Lalmai urban centres up to the eighth century. The existence of the Bull and Triglyph type of gold and silver issues, which show resemblance to some Arakani coins, has undoubtedly extended the phase of this importance to the eleventh century, if we do not reject the hypothesis that these coins belonged to the Candra kings. Although no indigenous coins have come to light to represent the period between the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Abbasid gold and silver pieces belonging to more than one Caliph indicate continuity in the history of maritime trade of south-east Bengal.

The indigenous coinage is of considerable importance, for it shows not only the existence of a currency to facilitate exchange at commercial levels, but also the continuous supply of gold and silver from abroad. As the Tippera-Chittagong region did not have deposits of gold-silver-bearing ore, we are to locate the sources of the precious metals in southern China, Burma, Pegu and South-East Asia.[14]

The precious metals could come to south-east Bengal if the region was in a position to export commodities needed by the neighbouring countries. In this connection we have to presuppose the continuity of commodity production and the existence of urban centres located along serviceable trade routes. Excavations at the Lalmai hills have laid bare pottery pieces of considerable quality and even at present potters form a significant class of artisans in the Mainamati-Lalmai region.[15] There exist also a group of people called *paṭua*[16] or "painters", who perhaps got the appellation from the fact of their original profession of executing motifs and designs on pottery pieces made for the purpose of export. Moreover, the fine or coarse textile fabrics and aloe-wood of the country of Rahmi mentioned by Sulaimān and Ibn *Kh*urdādbih[17] must have been the principal items of export. Indirect evidence of the existence of a weavers' community is also available. The Nātha yogīs, who constituted till recent times a significant socio-religious community in Comilla and the regions of Dacca and Noakhali adjacent to it, were originally weavers.[18] The essential immobility of the groups of artisans like those of potters and weavers indicates that they formed two major socio-economic classes of people in Comilla in the pre-Muslim period as well. It is thus highly probable that south-east Bengal got gold and silver from southern China, Pegu and south-east Asia in exchange of textile goods, earthen wares and also perhaps rice.

Questions relating to trade relations and the continuity or decline of maritime commerce need a quantitative analysis of the situation, which is impossible at the present state of our knowledge. Nobody can supply the details of imports and exports and periodic trade figures and balances, which are generally available to a student of recent economic history. Depending on the evidence of the continuous supply of gold, silver and also bronze, from which coins and the statuettes of Buddhist-tāntric gods and goddesses were made, it is presumed that the balance was generally in favour of south-east Bengal at least for some time.

About this trade we are giving some indications, of course, impressionistically. The "fine and delicate" cotton stuff of Ruhmi,[19] which Sulaimān claims to have seen in the ninth century, and the early Arab geographers' reference to "Samandār" (perhaps identical with Chittagong), which was "a large town, commercial and rich, where there are good profits to be made",[20] seem to throw some light on the problem of trade. As Marco Polo speaks of the use of cowries in Yunnan brought there by the Indian merchants,[21] we may presume Bengal's trade relations with southern China along the land routes which "must have continued through the Lushai and Tipperah hills into Bengal".[22] Arakan-Pegu and south-east Asian countries did not produce textile goods in an appreciable quantity so that they had to depend on Bengal for the supply of these materials.[23]

It is generally believed that the Arab merchants used to leave for China from the entrepot of Quilon on the Malabar coast and went straight to Kalah in the Malay peninsula without touching the coastal region of Bengal. Although the Arab descriptions of the coastal regions of India are very often shrouded in the mist of parageography, Ibn *K*hurdādbih indicates "a coasting voyage...through the Palk Strait and round the shores of the Bay of Bengal".[24] The knowledge of the political and economic conditions of the Chittagong-Arakan region (Ruhmi of Rahmi) betrayed by Sulaimān, Ibn *K*hurdādbih and Idrīsī, who lived between the ninth and twelfth centuries, and also the deposit of Abbasid *dīnārs* and *dirhams* recovered from the ruins of Mainamati, almost definitely point to the conclusion that the urban centres of south-east Bengal were visited by the Arab merchants, who must have carried the products of this region not only to south-east Asia but also to the western region of the continent. Of the numerous Arab trading centres or settlements that had come into existence in the Malay peninsula and the Indonesian archipelago between the seventh and tenth centuries, Palembang, Lambri (later called Pedir) and Kalah were perhaps connected with south-east Bengal by a line of coasting trade or of sea voyages *via* the port of Pegu. Thus geographical and commercial considerations bearing on the period in question lend strength to the hypothesis about the link of the region with international trade. Moreover, the religious buildings at Pagan (Ānanda Temple of 1090) in Burma and at Kalasan (778) in central Java, looking like parallels to the architectural style of the Salvana *Vihara* and the tāntric form of Buddhism, which permeated lives in different parts of South-East Asia and south-east Bengal,[25] are of significance. Culture could spread easily along trade routes and we have no reason to regard the Pāla empire as the only Indian source of cultural influence in Further India and south-east Asia. If the situation of geographical proximity is emphasized, we have adequate reasons to think that Arakan-Burma acted as a cultural and commercial intermediary between south-east Bengal and south-east Asia.

In the pre-Muslim period Harikela, Samataṭa and Vaṅga formed an economic unit whose parts were in almost constant communication with one another particularly along the river routes. The political and cultural centres of Mainamati and Lalmai, which had grown into an urban complex, had a considerable volume of trade sustained by a standard monetary system. They had maintained communications with the different regions of their hinterland along the course of the Kṣirodā river, which used to encircle Mainamati in the form of a moat.[26] As the river was perhaps originally a distributary of the Gomati and emptied into the Dakatiya connected with the Meghna[27] supplies from an extensive area must have been assured by the natural river system. It is reasonable to hold that Devaparvata and other cultural centres of the Mainamati-Lalmai region were connected with Chittagong and Ramu near Cox's Bazar on the Arakan road by a land route as well, either parallel to or identical with the highway constructed by Fakhr u'd-Dīn Mubārak Shāh in the early fourteenth century.[28] Chittagong and Ramu, or more preferably Dianga, whose antiquity is attested by archaeological and literary evidence,[29] served in that case as the sea-ports of south-east Bengal. Vikramapura, an administrative capital from the tenth century to the twelfth century,[30] had perhaps some commercial importance indicated by its location on the Dhalesvari which falls into the Meghna, although its political and military nature is also quite apparent from the term *jayaskandhāvāra* or "camp of victory" very often associated with it. The political and cultural importance of Paṭṭikerā in Samataṭa *maṇḍala* is clear from epigraphic and numismatic sources.[31] Its location near the Kṣīrodā and the Gomati and its role as a mint-town indicate its importance in the economic life of the country. One of the copper plates of Lāḍaha Candra mentions the *haṭṭaka* of Dhṛtipura. The suffix *pura* in the place name and the term *haṭṭaka* or "market centre" associated with it undoubtedly show its urban and commercial character. The copper plates of the time do not refer to Chittagong and Ramu, whose existence can perhaps be inferred from the accounts of the Arab writers.[32]

The indications of trade that we get from literary and numismatic sources are not reflected in the epigraphic records prepared during Deva, Candra and Varman rule so that it is impossible to determine how far the society was commercialized. The inscriptions do not mention the existence of merchants and skilled artisans or their representatives such as *sārthavāha*, *nagaraśreṣṭhī* and *kulika*, whom we come across frequently in the Gupta land grants. The conventional portions of the copper plates almost invariably refer to the high and low grades of government officials and their attendants showing that there was a stable bureaucracy. Such words as *rāṇaka* and *rājñī* perhaps point to the existence of feudal chiefs. The extensive land grants made in favour of brāhmaṇas and religious institutions, who used to be served within the donated lands by such sections of people as *mālākāras* (florists), *tailikas* (oilmen), *kumbhakāras* (potters), *kāhlikas* (drum-beaters), *śaṅkha-vādakas* (conch-blowers), *karmakāras* (blacksmiths), *karmakaras* (artisans), *carmakāras* (shoe-makers), *sūtradharas* (carpenters), *sthapatis* (architects or masons), *nāpitas* (barbers), *rajakas* (washermen), *vaidyas* (physicians) and others,[33] the rent-free nature of these lands enabling the donees to derive good income from them and the persistence in the epigraphs of the term *pīḍam* or "forced labour", a characteristic feature of feudal economy, clearly indicate the predominantly feudal structure of the society. Even if it is presumed that the copper plates have left out several socio-economic groups, it is apparent that the society was agriculture-based and that a long chain of intermediaries extended between the ruler and the cultivator. The bureaucracy noticed in the epigraphs of the time must have been a significant link in the chain of this feudal relationship.

It is perhaps with some justification that the agrarian nature of the base of the political and cultural centres of Mainamati-Lalmai and Vikramapura has been emphasized in some recent writings.[24] The feudal economy as indicated by the land grants could hardly preclude the possibility of the growth of trade and urban centres supported by a standard currency, for the administrative centres of the feudatories had the potentiality to grow into commercial centres if these lay on trade routes and had industrial centres with classes of artisans to make them commercially viable. The trade centres noticed above actually fulfilled these conditions.

But the period between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries shows distinct signs of the decay of trade and urban centres, a process which must have started earlier. We have already mentioned the Imitation gold coinage of the Deva period, which, with its perfection of motifs and purity of metal, indicates the political stability and economic prosperity of the Deva kingdom, also confirmed by the Mainamati excavations. It may be supposed that a great portion of the wealth of the Deva rulers was derived from trade and commerce. But the debasement of the gold currency indicated by the Bull and Triglyph type of gold coins discovered at the Salvana *Vihara* and the influx of silver issues of the same type, together with the total absence of an indigenous currency in the twelfth century, are perhaps the symptoms of the decline of maritime commerce. Should we suppose any dislocation in the sphere of trade and commerce, such a phenomenon might have been the result of certain forces working at local and international levels. After the fall of the Candra dynasty, under the Varman and the weak Sena rulers south-east Bengal must have passed through a process of political disintegration and the bureaucratic structure built up by the Candras lost its vitality. The proliferation of land grants, which is likely to have resulted under such circumstances, could easily affect agricultural and industrial production and the urban centres as well. The geological formation of the Mainamati-Lalmai region indicates that there had been an uplift which caused the silting of the river beds to the east of the hills and the recession of the shore line further in the southern direction.[35] Although the geological change must have taken place gradually, covering a long period of time, its ultimate impact on the economy of the area was devastating.[36] As the urban settlements were no longer accessible from the Meghna-Dakatia river system, they lost the maritime trade which had been responsible for their flourishing conditions. Merchants and artisans perhaps proliferated into other professional classes and the urban centres lost their economic viability. The fate of Vikramapura was not different from that of Devaparvata and Paṭṭikerā. Its decay or disappearance can be satisfactorily explained in terms of the behaviour pattern of the Dhalesvari-Meghna on which it was economically dependent. Alluviation caused by periodical inundations used to divert or change river routes causing serious hindrance to the mobilization of resources and affecting the viability of urban centres. The external element in the situation was perhaps provided by the gradually expanding nature of the Coromandal and Javanese trade and commerce[37] with which south-east Bengal could hardly compete. Perhaps there existed cultural and commercial ties between the Buddhist rulers of south-east Bengal and Śrīvijaya. Rājendra Coḷa's attack on Vaṅga in 1021-4[38] seems to have aimed at weakening this relationship, which must have lost its commercial basis by the middle of the eleventh century. Ramu or some port near Dianga, a part of which is still known as *bandar* or "port",[39] probably continued to work as a link in the line of coastal trade over the Chittagong-Arakan region, which had then only local importance. Survival of some of the urban centres of Mainamati till the thirteenth century, as shown by the presence of some Abbasid coins there, may be attributed to the existence of the land route that extended between this region and Chittagong; but long-range trade must have been either extremely limited or lost.

While south-east Bengal had a considerable volume of trade in the period extending from the eighth century to the thirteenth century, the urban centres of north and north-west Bengal had lost their commercial viability. Tāmralipta and Gaṅgābandara had become quite unsuitable for navigation with the result that the trade routes radiating from them also dried up. It is quite conceivable that the hinterland of these trade centres had hardly any commodity to attract foreign merchants. Local trade must have declined so that the castes of merchants and artisans had to take to agricultural pursuits, a situation reflected in the Pāla and Sena land grants, which indicate increased pressure on land.[40] The contrast between the economic situations obtaining in the two regions of Bengal becomes clear when we notice that most of the late Imitation Gupta coins, whose issuers are either unidentified or unknown, have been discovered from south-east Bengal and that the Bull and Triglyph type was issued from Paṭṭikerā or Harikela, while the northern and north-western region, which was under Pāla-Sena rule, went almost unrepresented in the history of numismatics. The systems of property transfers obtaining in the two regions also bring out this contrast. Concerning the grants of land in Samataṭa, which was the most important part of south-east Bengal, Barrie M. Morrison observes:

> In contrast, the copper plates from Samataṭa record gifts to Buddhists, as well as to Brāhmaṇas, rather than to an individual as is the case elsewhere in the Delta. Many of the property holdings being transferred were much larger than those anywhere else. These large grants to institutions, along with continued minting of a high quality silver currency and the largest known concentration of major building sites datable in this period in the whole of the Delta suggest that the rulers of Samataṭa were wealthier and were able to maintain a more stable political administration than other dynasties. Whatever the reason, property transfers in Samataṭa were different from those found elsewhere in the Delta.[41]

The wealth of the Samataṭa rulers and their attitude to property and religious institutions were perhaps related to their trade relations. Whereas the Pāla and Sena inscriptions containing detailed land measurements and specifications of the revenue yield suggest that the grants were made in the densely settled agricultural areas, the Candra copper plates, which lack in these details,[42] indicate less pressure on land in the Sylhet-Tippera region and the diversion of a considerable section of the population to trade and commerce. The cultural contact of Mainamati with Pahadpur suggested by the structural pattern of architecture and the motifs and form of sculptures discovered at these sites and above all the general religious milieu, which dominate these objects, point to the economic interdependence of the two regions whose details can perhaps never be known.

The foundation of Muslim rule in eastern India did not immediately revive urban centres and trade routes; nor did the institution of a coinage by *G*hiyāṣu'd-Dīn 'Iwaz *K*haljī (1213-27)[43] bring about any change in the existing situation. Throughout the thirteenth century the few independent sultans and the governors appointed by the Delhi sultans issued coins from the mint of Lakhnautī presumably to use them as an insignia of sovereignty. These coins could hardly serve as a medium of exchange at commercial levels, for trade routes, urban centres and centres of industrial production were yet to be properly organized or activized through the linking up of Bengal with the international trade system controlled by the Arab merchants. The situation began to change from the early fourteenth century when a number of mint towns had come into being and commodity production for exchange had also begun.[44] The problem of the delayed revival of maritime trade in Bengal can perhaps be explained with reference to the role the Arab merchants had been playing in the field of Asian trade and navigation. The establishment of Mongol domination over China (1206-1368) had possibly some bearing on Arab trade. Although it is believed to have created a potentially free-trade zone of a great extent, Arab merchants had reasons to suffer more than anybody else. As we know from the accounts of Ibn *K*hurdādbih, Sulaimān, Chu yü (1111), Chau K'ü-feī (1178) and Chau Ju-Kua (1225-50), Muslim merchants of different nationalities including the Arabs had settlements in China, Java and Sumatra.[45] These seem to have been overshadowed by the Chinese merchants whose trade along the Coromandal and Malabar coasts had reached its peak towards the end of the thirteenth century and in the first part of the fourteenth century.[46] It is thus understandable why Marco Polo (1257-91) has nothing to say about the Muslim settlements of China which were in a flourishing condition in the period between the ninth and twelfth centuries. It can hardly be shown that the Chinese merchants were coming to the ports of Bengal so that Chau Ju-Kua, who includes a brief reference to this country, gives but a confused account of its people and commodities, including it in the Coromandal region.[47] Moreover, the Arab merchants were adjusting themselves to the changing conditions during the declining phase of the Abbasid Caliphate and particularly after the fall of Baghdad in 1258. The flourishing condition of trade along the route from Siraf to Basra and Baghdad,[48] as depicted by Marco Polo, seems too impressionistic to be taken literally, for the diversion of the trade route from the Persian Gulf area to Alexandria-Aden-Cambay was taking place in the later part of the thirteenth century. The Arabs did no doubt play a dominating role in that region and along the Malabar coast visiting Quilon[49] and perhaps other ports where they could meet the Chinese merchants for the purpose of exchanging their commodities. Although they had direct contacts with south-east Asia, their visits to the urban centres of Bengal must have been occasional.

The situation underwent complete transformation only after 1400 when Malacca in the east and Calicut and Cambay in the west had gained sufficient importance as stapling centres and the role of the Gujarati, Kaling and Bengali merchants had become significant in international trade.[50] The diversion of the trade route, the increasing demand for south-east Asian spices in Europe, which expedited the production of industrial goods in the coastal regions of the subcontinent, and the role of the Arab-Chinese merchants in this period were perhaps directly responsible for the revival of trade and the growth of urban centres, industry and money economy which followed it as component elements in the new situation.

The problem of trade and currency in early Bengal has a theoretical bearing on the question of feudalism. The continuation of trade and the existence of a currency may not at all negate the possibilities of the agrarian economic forms and elements which constitute the basis of a feudal society. The immobility of the different classes of artisans resulting from their close attachment to priestly estates and religious foundations, could at best encourage them to produce for local consumption, not much for commercial exchange. Moreover, the kind of commercial activities, already touched upon, could hardly originate a process of urbanization that might bring into being a stable commercialized middle class, for profits from trade were either appropriated by the foreign merchants or frittered away by feudal lords or establishments. Capital formation under these conditions must have been impossible and the ruralization resulting from a predominantly agrarian economy perhaps remained unaffected by trade and money economy.

NOTES AND REEERENCES

[1] D. D. Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (Bombay, 1956), ch. IX; R.S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism : 300-1200* (University of Calcutta, 1965). These scholars have failed to take notice of the valuable studies embodied in Niharranjan Ray's *Vāṅgālīr Itihās*, Ādi Parva, first edn, 1356 B S /1949; reprint, 1359 B S./1952. For recent studies bearing on Indian feudalism, see R S. Sharma, "Problem of Transition from Ancient to Medieval in Indian History", *IHR*, i, no. 1 (March 1974), 1-9; "Methods and Problems of the Study of Feudalism in Early Medieval India", ibid i, no. 1, 81-4; "Indian Feudalism Retouched", ibid. i, no. 2 (September 1974), 319-30.

[2] R. C. Majumdar, ed, *History of Bengal*, i (Dacca, 1943), 668.

[3] Ibid. pp. 668-9; N. Ray. op. cit., p. 196.

[4] M. Harunur Rashid, "The Mainamati Gold Coins", *Bangladesh Lalit Kala*, i, no. 1 (1975), 41, 57-8: "The Origin and Early Kingdom of the Chandras of Rohitāgiri", *Bangladesh Historical Studies*, ii (1977), 17-8. F.A. Khan reported the discovery of 227 gold and silver coins when excavations at Mainamati were in progress. Most of these coins belong to the Bull and Triglyph type, *Mainamati* (Karachi, 1963), pp. 25-6.

[5] *History of Bengal*, i, 666-7.

[6] M. H. Rashid, "The Mainamati Gold Coins", op. cit., p. 44.

[7] Ibid. pp. 49-50, pl, XXIII, 3; F. A. Khan, op. cit., p. 25. This is the gold coin with the legend *śrī-vaṅgāla-mṛgāṅkasya* discussed below,

[8] A.H. Dani, "Coins of the Chandra Kings of East Bengal", *JNSI*, xxiv, nos 1-2 (1962), 141-2; idem, "Mainamati Plates of the Chandras", *Pakistan Archaeology*, iii (1966), 27. A.M. Choudhury has accepted this view, *Dynastic History of Bengal* (Dacca, 1967), pp. 163-4.

[9] M. H. Rashid, "The Mainamati Gold Coins", op. cit., p. 45; cf. "On palaeographical grounds also these coins are assigned to the 7th-8th centuries A.D.", F. A. Khan, op. cit., p.25.

[10] Cf. Antiquities nos 1392-3 of 1964, recovered from Cell 62, Salvana Vihara, *Bangladesh Lalit Kala*, i, no. 1, 57-8.

[11] It has been stated in the Rampal and Dhulia copper plates of Śrī Candra that Pūrṇa Candra, the first ruler of the Candra dynasty, "was born in the family of the Chandras (who were) rulers of *Rohitāgiri*". "Rohitāgiri" seems to be a Sanskritized form of "Rosangi" or Arakan, the original home of the Candra rulers of south-east Bengal. "Rosangi" may be a corrupt form of "Rohitāgiri". The colloquial form seems to have been derived by converting *ha* of the Sanskrit word into *sa* and dropping the soft *ta* and also the last consonant together with its vowel sign. The addition of *anusvāra* before *gi* was perhaps due to local nasal pronunciation. Scholars generally derive the term "Rosanga" from "Raksituṅga" and "Morohaung". Philologists may judge if our suggestion is valid. The traditional literature of Arakan mentions Arakanese incursions into Chittagong in the ninth and tenth centuries and also matrimonial relations between the members of the royal families of Arakan and Paṭṭikerā in a later period. During the political troubles of the ninth century, a branch of the Candra dynasty of Arakan, whose members had perhaps been ruling over the Chittagong area as its governors, gained political eminence in Harikela or Chittagong. The acquisition of Candradvīpa and the conquest of Samataṭa and Vaṅga by Trailokyacandra (900-30) made the Candra dynasty a great political power in south-east Bengal. Cf. A H. Dani, "Mainamati Plates of the Chandras", *Pakistan Archaeology*, iii, 28ff; A.M. Choudhury, op. cit., p. 158ff.; M.H. Rashid, "The Origin and Early Kingdom of the Chandras of Rohitāgiri", *Bangladesh Historical Studies*, ii, 12ff. The Bull and Triglyph symbol, which appears on the Mainamati and Arakan coins, suggests the lineal family descent of the Candras of Paṭṭikerā from the Candra family of Arakan.

[12] Cf. *History of Bengal*, i, 666ff; N. Ray, op. cit., pp. 197ff., 254-9, 343-8, 382ff., 461ff., 497-2, 839-44.

[13] F.A. Khan, op.cit., pp. 25-7; M.H. Rashid, "The Mainamati Gold Coins", op. cit., 58, pl. XXIV, 8.

[14] Marco Polo's accounts show that gold and silver were available in different parts of Yun-nan in southern China and also perhaps in upper Burma, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, tr., Ronald Latham, Penguin Books (London, 1969), pp. 153, 158. Chau Ju-Kua says that foreign merchants were collecting products of Malay in exchange of gold and silver, F. Hirth and W. W. Rockhill, *Chau Ju-Kua: His Work on the Chinese and Arab Trade in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Taipei, 1964), pp. 68, 69. Silver and gold are included among the exports of products of Pegu and Kedah in the accounts of F. Barbosa and Tomē Pires who wrote about the beginning of the sixteenth century, M.A.P. Meilink-Roelofsz, *Asian Trade and European Influence in the Indonesian Archipelago Between 1500 and about 1630* (The Hague, 1962), pp. 70, 71. Certain regions of west Sumatra had also very rich gold mines, B. Schrieke, *Indonesian Sociological Studies*, pt i (The Hague, 1955), 43, 52, 55, 56, 259, fn. 403.

[15] F.A. Khan, op. cit., p. 34ff.

[16] I owe this information to Professor Ahmed Sharif of the Depart-

ment of Bengali, Dacca University.

[17] Elliot and Dowson, *History of India As Told by Its Own Historians*, i, reprint (Allahabad, 1969), 5, 14, 361.

[18] It is quite significant that in 1910 there were 68,000 yogīs in Tippera district only, I.E. Webster, *District Gazetteer of East Bengal and Assam: Tippera* (Allahabad, 1910), p. 26; Kalyani Mallik, *Nātha Sampradāyer Itihās, Darśan O Sādhanāpraṇālī* (Calcutta, 1950), p. 95.

[19] Elliot and Dowson, op. cit., p. 5.

[20] Ibid. p. 90.

[21] Op. cit., p. 149.

[22] Simon Digby, *War Horse and Elephant in the Delhi Sultanate* (Oxford, 1971), p. 44.

[23] Pires, Barbosa and Fitch, cited in Meilink-Roelofsz, op.cit., pp. 68-9; M.R. Tarafdar, *Husain Shahi Bengal: A Socio-Political Study* (Dacca, 1965), pp. 140-1; "Vāṅglār Sāmudrik Vāṇijya O Yuga-Vibhāg-Samasyā", *Itihās*, vi, no. 3 (Dacca, 1379 B.S /1972), 214-7; Aruna Dasgupta, "Aspects of Bengal's Sea-borne Commerce in the Pre-European Period", *Proceedings of the Third History Congress* (Dacca, 1973), p. 153.

[24] G.F. Hourani, *Arab Sea-Faring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times* (Beirut, 1963), p. 71.

[25] F. A. Khan, op cit., pp. 11-2, 28. For Buddhist-tantric influence in south-east Asia including Śrīvijaya, see G. Coedes, *The Indianised States of South-East Asia* (Hawaii, 1968), pp. 81-96.

[26] The Kailan plate of Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta, *IHQ*, xxiii, 225, 237; cf. also the Paścimabhāga copper plate of Śrī Candra, A. B. M. Habibullah, ed, *Nalinikanta Bhattasali Commemoration Volume* (Dacca, 1966), pp. 172, 177-8; *Pakistan Archaeology*, iii, 31, and A.M. Choudhury, op.cit, pp. 145-6. Devaparvata, a capital city in the eighth century (cf. A. S. B. copper plate of Bhavadeva, *JASB*, xviii, 93) and a city in the tenth century (Paścimabhāga copper plate), has been identified with the ruins at the southern end of the Mainamati-Lalmai hills, N. K. Bhattasali in *IHQ*, xxii, 169-71; cf. Barrie M. Morrison, *Political Centers and Cultural Regions in Early Bengal* (Tucson, 1970), p 33.

[27] For the identification of the Kṣirodā with the Gungiajuri stream, which "flows generally south between the Comilla town and the Lalmai hills" and joins the Dakatiya in the further south, see M. Abu Bakr, *Reports of the Geological Survey of Bangladesh*, i, pt 2 (Quaternary Geomorphic Evolution of the Brahmanbaria-Nankhali Area, Comilla and Noakhali Districts, Bangladesh) (Dacca, 1977), p. 40; figs 11-4.

[28] There remain even at present traces of this road popularly known as "Fakhruddin's path" running almost parallel to the Demra-Comilla-Chittagong road.

[29] M.H. Rashid, "The Origin and Early Kingdom of the Chandras of Rohitāgiri", op. cit., 21, 23.

[30] Barrie M. Morrison, op cit., p. 57. In the copper plates issued by the Candra, Sena and Varman rulers, Vikramapura has been called a *jayaskandhāvāra* or "camp of victory", which clearly indicates that the place was a capital. For a list of these inscriptions, see Morrison,

op cit., pp. 162-3, 164-5, 167-8, 170.

[31] Paṭṭikeraka appears in the Mainamati copper plates of Lāḍaha Candra (1000-20), who erected there an image of Vāsudeva, called Śrī-Lāḍaha Mādhava Bhaṭṭāraka, *Pakistan Archaeology*, iii, 40, 44, 48, 49. The Mainamati copper plate of Raṇavaṅkamalla Harikāladeva shows that land was granted in 1220 in favour of a Buddhist monastery in the city of Paṭṭikeraka, *IHQ*, ix, 282-9. Some scholars are in favour of reading the legends on a number of the Bull and Triglyph type of coins as "Paṭṭikera", A.H. Dani,, "Coins of the Chandra Kings of East Bengal", *JNSI*, xxiv, 141; A.M. Choudhury, op. cit., pp 163-4.

[32] Tārānātha mentions Cāṭigrāma as the principal city of the country of Ramya identical with the region around Ramu near Cox's Bazar, M.H. Rashid, "The Origin and Early Kingdom of the Chandras of Rohitāgiri", op. cit., p. 21.

[33] These socio-economic groups are mentioned only in the Paścimabhāga copper plate of Śrī Candra (925-75), *Nalinikanta Bhattasali Commemoration Volume*, pp. 179, 180, 186-7, K.K. Gupta, *Copper Plates of Sylhet* (Sylhet, 1967), pp. 92, 99, 106-7. It is presumed that the record reflects general socio-economic conditions prevailing at least in some parts of south-east Bengal.

[34] Barrie M. Morrison, op.cit., p. 153; "Changing Forms of Government in Early Bengal", *Abdul Karim Sahityavisarad Commemoration Volume*, ed, Muhammad Enamul Haq (Dacca, 1972), pp. 63-4.

[35] Barrie M. Morrison, op cit., p. 8; Abu Bakr, op.cit., pp. 5, 44, citing J.P. Morgan and W.G. Mc. Intire, "Quaternary Geology of the Bengal Basin, East Pakistan and India", *Bulletin of the Geological Society of America*, lxx (1959), 319-42.

[36] Abu Bakr, op. cit., p. 44.

[37] Chau Ju-Kua refers to the Coromandal "cotton stuffs with coloured silk threads and cotton stuffs" and also to the Arab merchants visiting the Cōḷa dominion, op.cit., pp. 96, 97. Marco Polo also mentions that there had been much demand for the cotton goods of the place and that the merchants of the region had sound business ethics, op cit., pp. 247, 250. Chau K'ü-feī (1178) reflects on the commercial prosperity of Java which must have originated from its textile industry and foreign trade, Hirth and Rockhill, op. cit., pp. 23, 78. It seems that the expansion of the market for Japanese textile goods corresponded to its territorial expansion which had been taking place at the cost of the Buddhist kingdom of Śrīvijaya, cf. B. Schrieke, op.cit., pp. 234-5, and Meilink-Roelofsz, op.cit., pp. 16-7.

[38] *History of Bengal*, i, 137-9; A.M. Choudhury, op. cit., pp. 155, 156

[39] M.H. Rashid, "The Origin and Early Kingdom of the Chandras of Rohitāgiri", op. cit., p. 21.

[40] N. Ray, op.cit., pp. 236ff. 254.

[41] Barrie M. Morrison, op.cit., p. 125.

[42] Ibid pp. 99-100.

[43] That the Sultan had trade relations and commercial interests in mind is almost clear from his adherence to the 172.2-grain or 96-*rati*

standard, which seems to have been based on the ancient silver coin *purāṇa* weighing 32 *ratis*. 'Iwaz *Kh*aljī's preference for a particular weight standard in coinage is of significance. It was universally accepted by the rulers of Delhi and the pre-Mughal provincial kingdoms and was destined to survive, but for the short period of Suri rule, till recent times when the modern rupee also conformed to it, M. R. Tarafdar, "Bengal's Relations with Her Neighbours: A Numismatic Study", *Nalinikanta Bhattasti Commemoration Volume*, p. 228ff

[44] The establishment of mints at Lakhnautī, Satgaon, Sunargaon, *Gh*iyāspūr and Fīrūzābad during the early years of the century indicates that these towns located along the river routes were functioning as centres of trade and commerce. Wang Ta-yuan (1349-50) mentions "cotton stuffs" and "king-fisher's feathers" as native products and also cowries and silver coins helping exchange, quoted by P.C. Bagchi, *Visvabharati Annals*, pt i (1945), 99. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (1346) also noticed gold and silver coins in circulation, Mahdi Husain. *The Riḥla of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa* (Baroda, 1953), p. 234.

[45] G.F. Hourani, op.cit., pp. 72, 76-7; Hirth and Rockhill, op.cit., pp. 16-8, 22-3, 60, 64, fn. 2, 76, 80, fn. 3.

[46] B. Schrieke, *Indonesian Sociological Studies*, pt ii (The Hague and Bandung, 1957), 232.

[47] Op.cit., p. 97.

[48] Op.cit., p. 21.

[49] Ibid. p. 261.

[50] B. Schrieke, op.cit., pt i, 9-15; Meilink-Roelofsz, op.cit., pp. 15, 19ff.

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R.N. NANDI

Agrarian Growth and Social Conflicts in Early India

The wide divergence of opinion on the nature of early medieval social formation springs mainly from the outright rejection of a feudal development in India in the traditional European commentary on Indian history and society[1] with occasional reverberations in recent writings,[2] and the pioneering work done by Indian historians on the subject. For over thirty years now the problem of feudal formation has been considered in different circles and from various angles.[3] There has been theoretical discussion of a high order and also considerable empirical work of substantial merit. Consequently the problem today is not whether India experienced a feudal development but rather to find out the precise nature of such an experience. The present study tries to understand the interaction of forces which determined the nature and extent of feudal development in India, in the context of peninsular India with Karnataka as the centre.

In the peaninsular region, as in other parts of India, the relapse of a market economy of towns into a subsistence

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economy of agriculture, which followed a widespread decay and desertion of towns after the third Christian century seems to be the key factor in the origins of feudalism. With the progress of empirical studies and perceptive commentary[4] the idea of a phenomenal decline of urban places seems to emerge from the horizon of conjectures and consequently provide a nodal point for investigation.

Fiefs, Freeholdings and Temples

A major consequence of the decay of towns was the dispersal of a section of urban population and the rise of a surplus appropriating class in the hinterland.[5] In our opinion this was the principal motor force in initiating a whole series of developments—the growth of private farming and a servile labour force, improvements in the techniques of agriculture and increase in crop-production, all of which ultimately led to the growth of a market-economy of towns during the eleventh century. The number of fief-holders and freeholders, who were the chief architects of this transition, may have been small in the beginning, but this could hardly prevent these powerful and demanding people from developing their exclusive domains as the focal points of agricultural expansion.

Expansion of Fiefdom

In the peninsular region the feudalization of the state can be traced from the close of the sixth and the beginning of the seventh century.[6] The planting of warriors as landholders and the creation of service tenements became an important factor in the creation of fiefs. The appearance of a large number of *vīragals* registering the names and heroic deeds of the folk-heroes and warrior underlords[7] since the middle of the eighth century suggests the rising pace of subinfeudation. In many cases the *viragals* are a recognition of the fulfilment of contractual obligations by the subordinate in responding to the chief's summons for armed service and by the overlord in extending protection and reward to the families of concerned warriors, fallen or alive. The contract itself was symbolized by the ceremonial tying of the badge of honour (*paṭṭamgaṭṭi*) on the forehead of the subordinate by his lord-superior in the case of low-ranking fiefholders. In the case of high officers and commanders, the contract was symbolized by gifts of estate honour and symbols of feudal authority like the five musical instruments, parasol, throne, gateways symbolizing the beginings of castle life besides horses, servants and an agricultural tract commensurate with the status of the enfeoffed lord. Variations in the grant of seigneurial rights appear to have been determined by the size of the fief and the rank of the fiefholder in the hierarchical gradations of rank and power. A four-tier feudal hierarchy is also fully in evidence by the close of the tenth century.[8]

Multiplicity of the Freeholdings

The brāhmaṇa freeholdings appeared on the rural scene much earlier than the fiefs. On epigraphic grounds, the earliest brāhmaṇa freeholding in Karnataka would go back to the middle of the second century. But by the seventh century the chartered brāhmaṇa villages had infiltrated a larger area of peasant production and assumed the characteristics of the private domains of governmental jurisdiction. Now these units of advanced agriculture were able to exercise some influence on the modes of surplus production.

The developments which characterized the growth of rural economy in and around these focal points of agricultural expansion can be summed up as (1) attempts to increase the production of food crops by reclaiming new lands, converting old dry land into wet rice field through consolidation of drainage facilities,[9] (2) development of new modes of surplus-collection by means of the free-feeding places (*satra*), and sanctification of the village as rural places of pilgrimage (*tīrtha*), and (3) introduction of the brāhmaṇical temple institutions in a world which did not earlier know much of these establishments.

The Population Factor

A leisured class of surplus-appropriators would not strain itself to raise production unless compelled to do so by a rising population. Although precise data on the growth of population is as difficult to come by in India as in medieval Europe,[10] the inscriptions do sometimes throw valuable light on this subject. The appearance of the *sabhā* assembly[11] in the eighth century is probably the first indication of a sizeable brāhmaṇa population whose interests had become too complex and exclusive to be looked after by the common village assembly. We may also mention here that small-sized *sabhā* assemblies are a characteristic feature of the earlier period; but from the same areas larger bodies numbering 300, 500, 1000, 1300, 2000, 3000 and 12000 are frequently reported in later inscriptions. This coincides significantly with the rise in the number of collective landgrants[12] in different parts of the country. In many cases the shares of each of these families are specified as in the Pithapuram inscription of Vīra Coḍa[13] which mentions the shares of 528 families which had settled down in a cluster of three adjacent villages forming a *caturvedīmaṅgalam*. In many areas, however, such large groups had a small beginning. For example, the Gautama *agrahāra* of the Shikārpūr taluk had a *sabhā* assembly of 1000 chiefs in the year 890 but its total brāhmaṇa population rose to 32000 in 1027. Whether 1000 brāhmaṇas could swell into 32000 in the course of 137 years can be debated.[14] The gap would, however, narrow down if we remember that 1000 was the size of the brāhmaṇa assembly whereas 32000 refers to the entire population of brāhmaṇas. Since the brāhmaṇa assembly consisted of the chief of brāhmaṇa families and since a brahmaṇa family would have at least four members including the chief himself, the total brāhmaṇa population of Gauḍa *agrahāra* in 890 may be placed at four thousand. Also considering that every twenty to twenty-five years there will be at least two additional young members in each family and with an average longevity of 70 years the village could easily acquire a population of eight to ten thousand after three generations. This increase was more likely because all marriages could take place within the village where exogamous families would not be difficult to find. At this rate a population in the vicinity of 32000 after nearly a century and a half may not appear to be unrealistic. The importance of such imprecise and widely variable estimates of population lies not in the exactness of demographic data but in the unmistakable impression of a slowly rising brāhmaṇa population in villages.

The growing density of brāhmaṇa population in a locality can also be evidenced from the increased number of brāhmaṇa settlements in that area. For an illustration, in the Shikarpur taluk which lay in the heartland of Taradavaḍi and which was in the full focus of feudal development, the history of brāhmaṇa settlements began with just one family of freeholders[15] in the second century. A hundred years later another twelve villages were nucleated around Sahalatavi and donated to a descendant of the earlier recipient.[16] By the close of the ninth century however the taluk had no less than sixteen brāhmaṇa villages[17] some of which were administered by 3000 brāhmaṇa chiefs and some by 1000 members. A century later many of these *agrahāras* were teeming with thousands of brāhmaṇas, and in one specific instance the population is given as 32000 of which 12000 were *agnihotrīs* (orthodox fire ritualists) who formed the core of the population in the concerned *agrahāra*.[18]

From the ninth century onwards the appropriation of food surpluses was meant not only for the resident brāhmaṇas but also for those brāhmaṇas and non-brāhmaṇas who had started frequenting these villages in quest of food[19] and in most places were giving rise to prebendary sects. We have shown elsewhere that the formation of monastic orders in the peninsular region can be traced only from the first quarter of the ninth century.[20] In the beginning the free boarding places (*satra*) which catered to the requirements of these roving bands were established independently of the temple institutions but from the tenth century onwards the free boarding houses were becoming an integral part of the emergent temple institutions. Apart from accelerating the process of social interdependence across peasant localities, the choultry and the temple brought added sanctification for the brāhmaṇa villages which were soon proclaimed rural centres of pilgrimage.

The Temple Factor

In the early middle ages the temple emerges as a legitimizer of political power and as an instrument of peasant subordination and surplus-accumulation. In the beginning, the temples remained generally confined to urban places of political importance such as Kanchipuram and Mahabalipuram in Tamil Nadu and Pattadakal, Aihole and Badami in Karnataka. From the eighth century onwards the temples began to invade the rural world which was till now dominated by folk deities and folk rituals unassociated with any permanent structures. The penetration of the brāhmaṇical temple institutions in rural areas began on a low key during the eighth century but became a widespread structural enterprise during the tenth and eleventh centuries. This seems to be related to the progressive feudalization of the state structure. As private governmental jurisdiction began to expand, the legitimizing role of the temple became more and more relevant. The apportionment of *agrahāra* land to brāhmaṇical deities is first noticed in the charters of the eighth century, and petty country lords from the ninth century onwards find it necessary to patronize temples in their villages. A ninth century Sira taluk inscription refers to a *mahāmaṇḍaleśvara* who established his army camp in a chosen village, constructed a brick temple of Śiva, offered his "palace" to the god, and donated a whole village for maintaining offerings to the deity, temple repairs and for running a free boarding house.[21] Between the ninth and eleventh centuries, vassalization was a major incentive behind the patronage of temple institutions by feudatories of widely varying rank and power. A major compulsion behind the growth of a rural network of temples seems to have been a desired direct access to peasant goods. The constantly shifting feudal garrisons or the modest *pura/durga* settlements of the period which grew out of the rural settlements also helped the process considerably. However, the vulnerability of these places to total destruction as a result of feudal wars was a constant deterrent factor. The destruction of towns would mean complete snapping of the administrative links between the town and the country on which alone the priests could depend. Many temples which came up at important urban places during the seventh century met this fate. Nearly seventy temples were built at the Cālukya capital at Aihole besides many others at Pattadakal and Badami, but hardly any of these remained in active service after the overthrow of the Cālukyas in the mid-eighth century.[22] A similar fate befell Mahabalipuram after the fall of Pallava dynasty though Kanchipuram, the Pallava capital, continued to receive royal patronage during the succeeding Coḷa period. This is not to suggest, however, that the ruralization of brāhmaṇical temples immunized them from the effects of feudal warfare and dynastic changes. But since the temple was now a landlord and in full control of the means of production, it could easily overcome any such calamity.

During the eleventh century the state tried to reassert its authority, but the existence of numerous freeholdings appeared to be a major fiscal constraint on the growth of political authority. This led to the growing patronage of temple institutions at the cost of *brahmadeyas* and *agrahāras*. The decline in the patronage of *brahmadeyas* in the Tamil region after the time of Kulottunga I has been noticed by some scholars.[23] *Brahmadeyas* were converted into *veḷḷānvagai* and transferred to temples.[24]

The country-based expansion of temple network during the eleventh century can be illustrated by single village studies of inscriptions and temple structures. Periya Malavur in the Channapatna taluk of Bangalore district shows the earliest inscriptional reference to the village or its shrine in 1000, when a Coḷa commander built the present Iśvaram stone temple and purchased certain lands from the *sabhā* of Maḷavūr to provide for offerings to the deity and food to the priests.[25] That the Maḷavūr *agrahāra* did not have any important temple institutions before this date is confirmed by the architectural dating of temples at the village.[26] The construction of the Iśvaram temple marked the beginnings of a continuous structural activity, and in less than 15 years' time three major temple establishments, with extensive stone constructions and full representation of the important brāhmaṇical sects, appeared in the village.[27] The constructions and endowments continued till the days of the Vijayanagar empire, but the evidence relating to the beginnings of this process appears in the first quarter of the eleventh century.

Private Farms and Servile Labour

In the context of the supposed absence of private property in land it may be pertinent to examine epigraphic data on the alienation of land through gifts and sale and also identify the parties involved in such transactions. Although the evidence for alienation of land is more positive during the eleventh-thirteenth centuries, this need not suggest the absence of such transactions in the earlier period. Further, although communal holdings were freely transferred to brāhmaṇa freeholders, military and other officers and temple *devadāna* holders, individual holdings could not possibly be taken away with as much impunity or without a price being paid.

To illustrate individual ownership of land, we may discuss some early eleventh century epigraphic sources from Karnataka.

A Mysore district inscription of 1027 refers to a *gāvuṇḍa* landowner who sold in return for an unspecified amount of money certain plots of land to a co-villager.[28] The sale deed was registered by a revenue officer (*heggaḍe*) of the locality at the request of seven peasant elders who were witnesses to the sale and who belonged to as many neighbouring villages. Purchase of land from individual peasant owners was also made by kings and the brāhmaṇa *sabhā* assemblies. A Coorg inscription of 1070 mentions the purchase of 10 *kaṇḍugas* of land by the king from a landlord whose name is given as Naraka Gāvuṇḍa.[29] The land was acquired for constituting a *devadāna* holding. In another transaction of land sale the purchaser was the *sabhā* assembly of an *agrahāra* and the sellers were a woman and her relative. But the price of the land and the size of the plot remain unstated.[30] The same *sabhā* assembly purchased on the same date another piece of land from an individual landowner; the price of the land is specified as 9 *kaḷañju* of gold but the size of the plot is not indicated. During the eleventh-twelfth centuries the fiefs granted to officers or underlords also appear in the land market. A piece of territory which had originally been granted to a *gāvuṇḍa* village headman as *vṛtti* or maintenance fee was subsequently sold to an enterprising merchant for an unspecified amount of money. The transaction was contested by a grand child of the family on the ground that the merchant had played a fraud and that the amount had not actually been paid. But although the merchant lost the suit and "hung his head in shame", he continued as the owner of the Elambaḷḷi fief.[31]

Individual property in land was also growing on *devadāna* lands during the tenth-thirteenth centuries. The development appears to have been facilitated by the ruralization of temple institutions from the ninth century onwards and the consequent growth of vested hereditary rights on the plots earmarked for the maintenance of the families of priests and ecclesiastics. The fields appear to have been worked by people who formed part of these holdings and were accordingly characterized as the servants of the priests or the farmers of the monasteries.[32] Later instances of individual *devadāna* holding, however, show the alienable nature of such property. A Bangalore taluk inscription of 1294[33] mentions 28 men of a village who received grants of certain plots of land with the absolute right of disposal through gift and sale (*dāna-vikraya-yogyam*). These 28 men were to act as the *sthānapati* of the local temple establishment and look after the charities made over to the god. The land evidently was a remuneration for the work they did for the temple. A Devanahalli taluk inscription of 1283[34] refers to the grant of certain specified plots to 32 brāhmaṇas with the right to make addition through purchases and to alienate through gifts and sale (*kraya-vikraya-dānayogyam*). This again was payment of salary in land converted into private property for a service to be rendered on a hereditary basis. In this case the 32 brāhmaṇas were asked to recite the *Vedas* in the local temple on certain specified days. The request of individual holdings along with the farm cattle, agricultural labour, agricultural inputs, crops and houses would indicate that cultivable land was as much a family inheritance as farm cattle or dwelling houses.[35] References to individual holdings and private pastures in boundary descriptions of villages and fields donated to brāhmaṇas or temples are equally significant indications of private property in land.[36] A Managoli inscription of 1161 from the Bijapur district mentions the agricultural land of an individual named Chenna Gesimeyya[37] as the boundary-mark of fields donated to a temple. We may also draw attention to an inscriptional reference to a peasant's sons who laid down their lives in defence of their father's land[38] and to the blood feud between peasant families for possession of land with bamboo thickets.[39] The increasing demand for cultivable land is as much evident from a brisk land market as from violent conflicts for the possession of land. In the Co*l*a kingdom the growth of private landholdings is said to have created a kind of imbalance which affected the social and economic processes in a large measure. The large accumulation of agricultural land by rich landlords forced many other landholders to lose their *kāṇi* rights in land and slip into the position of evicted tenants or landless cultivators.[40] The growing imbalance in the distribution of landed property, particularly the dispossession of the old resident peasantry of their hereditary *kāṇi* rights, might explain the changing relations of interdependence between communities and the consequent social turmoil. The situation was aggravated by the emergence of large-scale military holdings during the middle and late Coḷa periods.[41]

Labour Supply

The problem of a slowly changing mode of production can also be viewed in terms of the labour content of production. The sources of the pre-Christian and early Christian centuries suggest that productive labour force comprised two distinct halves, one consisting of slaves and the other of sharecroppers and wage-earners. During the earlier half of the first millennium, however, slaves do not figure in productive labour services, their place having been taken by the sharecroppers and wage labourers.

The expansion of private farming brought about changes in the control and deployment of field labour. While the sharecropper system continued in the peasant holdings, a new class of servile labour was slowly emerging in the fiefs and freeholdings, mainly from amongst the old class of sharecroppers. The conditions in which productive labour became servile and immobile appear to have been growing throughout the early medieval centuries in the wake of the growth of private property in land in the fiefs and brāhmaṇa freeholdings. The extensions of arable land, construction and renovation of irrigation works and adoption of new or marginal crops which characterized agricultural expansion in these private domains could not but lead to a relative scarcity of labour. This may have encouraged the relations of bond-service in the fiefs and *agrahāras*. The process of peasant subjection was also helped by the impoverishment of cultivators as a result of the increasing shares of the produce demanded by fiefholders and freeholders which is evident from claims of one-fifth and two-fifths of the surplus in place of the normal one-sixth. One Channapatna taluk record of 1050 shows that a Coḷa king authorized his feudatories to collect half of the produce although he himself was collecting no more than "one-sixth of the entire produce of the earth".[42]

Whether the transfers of sharecroppers together with the fields to their new masters[43] would amount to the growth of serfdom of the west European type can be debated for some more time but not the effects of the growth of servile labour in initiating the process of agricultural expansion and increase in crop-production. One may also argue that since serfdom was essentially a form of servile labour brought about by changes in the existing political structure and since the purpose of such servility was to raise the production of peasant surpluses it may not perhaps be necessary to look for stereotype[44] or consider serfdom exclusive to feudalism.[45] If serfdom is understood as an 'obligation' laid upon the producer by force and independently of his own volition to fulfil certain economic demands of an overlord in the form of dues and services,[46] such a purpose could be achieved by reducing sharecroppers on fiefs and free-holdings to the condition of servile labour.[47] In certain localities and probably to a considerable extent the conditions of servility were reinforced by the right to requisition labour.[48] In the feudal domains the basis of such coercion was the military power of the overlord whereas in the freeholding, such authority was based on custom backed by a juridical procedure and sanctification.

Long periods of oppressive collection of shares and services and the subjection of the peasantry in the feudal holdings brought about a fundamental change in the relations between the landlords and field labourers in these holdings. Perhaps this alone would justify the characterization of agricultural labourers as bond-servants and bond-workers in the inscriptions of eighth-ninth centuries. Though such expressions are frequent in later epigraphic records, the beginnings of bonded field labour in the eighth century coincide meaningfully with the expansion of private farms, improved techniques of agriculture and increase in crop-production. A close look at the epigraphic material would indicate the distinction between plural references to bond servants and references to individual bond-servants mentioned by their caste or profession. The former evidently were agricultural labourers attached to fields while the latter were artisans and service castes attached to the lord's household and providing him necessary goods and services. We may here refer to the washerman *asaga* who was a bond servant of a *gauḍa* landlord (*nāḍprabhu*) of Avali fief[49] or the blacksmith (*kammāra*) who also served the Avali lord as a bond-servant.[50]

In some localities the lords appear to have used their bond-labourers to cultivate land in captured villages. We may refer to an early ninth century hero-stone from the Sorab taluk to highlight the point.[51] The inscription refers to a refractory underlord who, disobeying the orders of his overlord, forcibly occupied a certain village while his bonded labourers who belonged to a nearby village Parige (*parigeya banḍugiyār*)[52] started cultivation in the occupied village. Of greater significance in the present context is the statement that the *banḍugiyār* of Parige had destroyed the strength of four bullocks and "by fraud converted it into six bullocks". In all likelihood the intruders had extended the cultivable area which was formerly ploughed by four bullocks by encroaching on nearby fields. The area was however reduced to its original size by the overlord who got the lands ploughed once again by four bullocks, determined its boundaries and transferred it to the family of a folk hero who had fallen in ousting the rebel chief from the occupied village. His bond-labourers were also driven out from the occupied fields. In another inscription of a later date from the same area the bond-servant (*besa-vagaḷ*) of a village attacked a neighbouring brāhmaṇa freeholding. The *vīragal* which was erected to perpetuate the death of a warrior who fought on the side of the brāhmaṇas states that many of the *besa vagaḷ* were killed in the fight.[53] The presence of bonded field labourers on private holdings of rich landowners is also indicated by the inscriptions of eleventh-twelfth centuries which refer to bequests of agricultural land (*kṣetram*) together with agricultural labour, farm cattle (*dvipadi-catuspadī*), grains or crops (*dhānya*), dwelling houses (*gṛham*) and other property (*dhana*).[54] Such examples relate to the same north-western Karnataka from where the instance of *bandugiyār* and *besa vagaḷ* are reported.

In the brāhmaṇa freeholdings, the origins of servile field labour can be traced very early in the transfer of *addhika* share-croppers along with the plots of land donated to brāhmaṇas.[55] But the power of coercion increased only later as the demand for such labour rose with the brisk pace of agricultural expansion. This increase in coercive authority is reflected by such characteristic terms as *tottu*, *bandugiyār* and *besa-vaga*. We may also observe that the *besa-vaga* figures mostly in conncetion with attacks on brāhmaṇa villages, the *tottu* and *bandhugiyār* are enumerated together with different categories of working people inhabiting rural tracts. The *besa-vaga* may also have functioned as a category of rural militia whereas the *bandhugiyār* and *tottu* were an exclusive group of bonded field labourers. The presence of bonded agricultural labourers on brāhmaṇa holdings is also established beyond doubt by the bracketing of farm cattle with farm labour (*emme eṭṭu paśu tattu kaṭine*) in some inscriptions of the twelfth century.[56] That the bonded labourers formed a class apart and an inferior one can be seen from the use of partisan adjectives to denote different groups of people in the same village who laid down their lives in defence of brāhmaṇas. Where a folk hero of higher social rank was concerned the terms used were 'dear son' (*priya putra* or *magam*). But where bond-servants were concerned no such compliment is offered.

Labour servility also characterized production on temple estates, which mainly enslaved artisans and service-castes for the consolidation of the temple organization. In return the families of masons, metal workers, carpenters and potters received a sanctification of the social status, and accordingly differentiated themselves from other members of their respective castes. During the tenth-eleventh centuries the temples frequently subjected the oil pressers and loom-workers. We do not know whether large-scale bond-service also characterized agricultural production on *devadāna* holdings. The references to the farmers and servants of monastic chiefs[57] might suggest that on the holdings apportioned to priests and pontiffs on a hereditary basis the field labourers were as good as bond-workers.

The shortage of field labour which was already being experienced in the wake of agricultural expansion appears to have been intensified by the beginning of the second millennium. Probably this was partly related to the growth of a market-economy which helped to dissociate large groups of artisans from marginal farming activities and convert a part of the field labour into constructional labour. The latter was in great demand following unprecedented structural activity during the tenth and eleventh centuries.

The constraint of reduced supply of field labour may have been overcome by captive labour. Village raids in the eighth-tenth centuries were prompted by demands of farm cattle and foodgrains, but the *vīragals* of the eleventh-twelfth centuries show the rising incidence of captive labour. The people who were captured in the course of these raids could find rehabilitation either in the form of bonded labour on the estates of feudal lords or in the feudal militia. A Sorab taluk inscription of 1213 refers to a feudal lord who attacked a brāhmaṇa village and captured its cattle, stocks of grain and men (*jana*)[58] In another inscription of the same taluk[59] the two bond-servants (*besa-vaga*) of a *gauḍa* chief, who is described as the master (*odeya*) of the two men, rescued the cattle and men of a brahmāṇa freeholding being carried by a feudal lord.

The growing incidence of bond-service in fiefs, freeholdings and the temple *devadāna* holdings during the eleventh-twelfth centuries and the simultaneous growth of a partial labour market in the wake of increasing money-circulation seem to underline a contradictory situation in certain areas. The effects of the money market may have been first experienced in the artisanal sector. If the construction of tanks and temples involved an expenditure of money, as indeed was happening in some cases, some amount of mobility on the part of constructional labour may not have been unlikely. A Bangalore taluk inscription of 1110 mentions the construction of a temple enclosure in a village at the cost of 500 *paṇas*.[60] In another instance the merchant company of the city of Talkad paid an unspecified amount of money for repairing the sluice of an irrigation tank.[61] Whether agricultural labour also received wages in money is not clear though the peasant families during the eleventh century were very much in possession of coined money and even paid money rents. Several inscriptions of this period mention transfers of *paṇam* money rent collected from villages to temples for providing specified services.[62] But garden labourers in certain areas received payments in money which the temple earned by loaning out principal sums to traders and others. The amount of loan itself was part of the temple's liquid capital or charitable funds instituted by rich patrons. A Coḷa inscription of 1021 from Mysore district mentions the charity of an army officer who deposited ten *kaḷañjus* of gold coin with the town council of Māvilangai to provide for a servant to be employed in the garden of the local temple.[63] The record is of added significance in view of the phenomenal growth of garden keeping during the tenth-eleventh centuries and the expertise needed in planting and rearing different fruit plants, flower-plants and vine-creepers.

The effects of wage payments in minted money on the mobility of artisanal labour were however much more pronounced than those on constructional labour or field labour. This would perhaps explain the fact that despite the increasing enslavements of agricultural and artisanal labour by fiefholders, brāhmaṇa freeholders and temple *devadāna* holders, there were attempts to escape to the emerging towns where wage payments in money had picked up from the close of the eleventh century. Money payments for both labour services and goods produced by the peasants and artisans are too evident in the epigraphy to need emphasizing. Even such minor professional groups such as mat-makers, basket-makers, flower-vendors, and vendors of dairy-products functioned as large corporate bodies and paid specified amounts of money as tax. Service castes such as washermen also earned enough cash profits to make outright money-payments to the state.

To a limited extent the emerging money market appears to have liberalized the conditions of bond-service or, at least shattered the immobility of rural artisans. We may refer here to an early twelfth century inscription from the Sorab taluk.[64] The inscription is a *vīragal* recording the death of a blacksmith's son who lived in the village Avali but whose death occurred in a fight near a town (*ūra*) when the blacksmith's son was going on work (*besa-bogalu*). It seems that the *kammāra* was going to the dirsict headquarters Honnapaḷḷi to report for chartered duty. The chartered nature of work is suggested by the term *besa-bogalu* or bond-service requisitioned by the *mahāmaṇḍaleśvara* lord of whose domain the village was a part. Certainly, the record does not suggest any emancipation of bonded artisanal labour. What it suggests is the city-bound mobility of village artisans and the rising demand for skilled labour in emerging towns. We find that although the blacksmith's son represented a kind of migrant labour from countryside, the blacksmith himself remained bound to his village lord's estate and served him in the capacity of *besa-magam* or bonded son, the suffix *magam* (son) not diluting in any manner the bonded character of the service. Group migration of artisanal workers to nearby towns also seems to have started during the eleventh-twelfth centuries.

Mention may be made of a group of *vīragal* carvers who migrated to the new Hoysaḷa capital of Belur where great constructional activity was going on in the earlier part of the twelfth century. There must have been sufficient incentives for the movement of *vīragal* engravers who normally remained confined to their villages and lived on meagre wage payments in grain for their work.[65] In some cases the temple institutions tried to prevent such migration and force the workers to render mandatory service to the temples concerned. One instance of this type is furnished by a Channagiri taluk inscription of 1050. Though the full significance of this highly damaged record cannot be made out, what remains of the concluding part is enough to highlight the contradictions of a developing market economy. The record shows that the working people of a village in the Channagiri locality tried to migrate from the village. In a bid to prevent this movement the local authorities led by a *gauḍa* chief confiscated the tools (*sastravan*) of the concerned workers and deposited these as security in a temple for whose services the artisans seem to have been detained. Following a compromise the names of some of the workers were registered evidently for rendering service whenever required. With the conclusion of this agreement the confiscated tools were returned (lit. allowed to be sharpened). One might also think that all the other workers whose names were not registered were now free to migrate to a place of their choice.[66]

The Technique of Agriculture

Agricultural expansion of the early middle ages was marked by extension of cultivable land, improvement in drainage technology and increase in crop production. Extension of the cultivable area by forest clearance, waste reclamation, reclamation of coastal land and virgin tracts and establishment of new villages would however presuppose some scarcity of agricultural land notwithstanding the oft-repeated idea of land abundance. Scarcity of land cannot however be measured only in terms of the availability of surplus land but also in terms of the ability of the peasant folk to make use of this surplus land. The *Pattuppāṭṭu* poems refer to vast stretches of grassland intervening between settled tracts and forests.[67] But to reclaim even a part of this virgin land would call for resources which the peasant folk may not be able to mobilize. It would be much easier to develop dry land and waste plots within the village with the help of exisiting irrigation tanks or by excavating new tanks than to reclaim virgin land and forest tracts lying beyond the boundaries of the village and without any dependable source of irrigation. This is precisely what the cultivators in peasant villages continued to do throughout the period.[68] By contrast, all instances of forest clearance, reclamation of virgin land and development of coastal land during the same period relate in varying degrees to brāhmaṇa freeholders, fiefholders and temple *devadāna* holders who provided the necessary incentives for the early growth of rural economy in India.

The scarcity of cultivable land and food surpluses do not however surface in the Śaṅgam works which make pointed references to abundance of crop production despite a low technology with vast stretches of grassland lying unclaimed. The abundance of crop production was evidently related to the high fertility of land. Some idea of this high fertility is furnished by the poems in the *Pattuppāṭṭu* and the *Eṭṭuṭokai* which state that the soil was so productive that even one *veli* (one acre) of land could yield a thousand *kalams* (roughly thousand maunds) of paddy and that a patch of land covered by a sitting elephant could feed seven persons throughout the year.[69] The abundance of crop production despite a low technology could not however continue for too long in the face of a rising surplus demand from a large class of fiefholders and brāhmaṇa freeholders. And since cropproduction could not be appreciably increased with the existing technological level, improvements in the techniques of agriculture were inevitable. Such improvement can be noticed during the Śaṅgam age itself from references to paddy transplantation, crop rotation, manuring and fallow cultivation. Towards the close of the Śaṅgam period we also hear of sluices and shutters used in tanks for controlled drainage of fields.[70] All this would anticipate the great expansion of agriculture during the three closing centuries of the first millennium.

The first clear reference to reclamation of forest land is furnished by an inscription of the sixth century belonging to a minor Kadamba dynasty of Goa region.[71] The record entitled a brāhmaṇa to employ four batches of labourers (*preśyakula*) to clear a patch of forest tract and cultivate it (*araṇya-karṣaṇa*). The earliest mention of coastal land brought under rice cultivation is also furnished by this interesting record. The one *hala of kahjjana* or coastal land which was converted into rice-fields by damming sea-water in the shape of a *nullah* was named *vakuḷakacchakṣetra*, the word *kaccha* (coastal) being significant in this connection. The next example of forest clearance is implicit in a Goribidnur taluk inscription of 762. It refers to a Kāśyapa brāhmaṇa who received several allotments of different types of land together with a title over forest land which formed the common boundary of all the four villages in which the lands were situated.[72] Compared to these the later examples of forest clearance and reclamation of virgin land are much more explicit and elaborate. For an illustration we may cite a Nanjangud taluk inscription[73] of 904. The inscription praises a Taittirīya brāhmaṇa of the Tanaguṇḍūr Mahārāma which had earlier been settled by a group of Ahicchatra brāhmaṇas as the promoter of people's welfare (*janodaya*) by executing well devised schemes calculated to deliver benefits. One of these schemes evidently was the construction of a huge tank which put to shame the great ocean. The stated purpose of this tank, which was fed by three small rivers emerging from the nearby Manali forest, was to provide food to the people of the locality. Accordingly, the tract around the new tank was constituted, with the permission of the Ganga king, into a freeholding named Śiva-Ayyanamangala and divided into 120 shares of which 60 were given to worthy brāhmaṇas of Tanaguṇḍūr and 60 retained by the brāhmaṇa entrepreneur for his sons and grandsons. Another inscription[74] of 935 states that a revenue officer of the Banavasi-12,000 administration excavated a tank at Tanaguṇḍūr and transferred plots below the new tank to a local temple. A similar specific instance of agricultural expansion is furnished by the late Pallava Rayacotta plates of Skandaśiṣya from the Krishnagiri taluk of Salem district.[75] The record which is addressed to the inhabitants of the fort (*koṭṭai*) and the inhabitants of the district (*nāḍu*) mentions the transfer of a village to a Vatsa brāhmaṇa together with the wastes under cultivation and surrounding the village jungles which had been cleared by burning the trees and thickets and dry land under cultivation besides embankments, channels and causeways. It is likely that the village had been established or extended earlier by clearing forests and bringing wastes and dry land under cultivation with the help of tanks and channels which too are mentioned in the record. Sometimes such extensions of *agrahāra* land was financed by prosperous merchants settled in these villages. A late eleventh century Sorab taluk inscription mentions a *seṭṭi* who cleared a patch of forest bordering on the Kuppatura *agrahāra*, excavated a tank and laid out rice-fields all around the tank.[76]

Reclamation of village wastes, even if known earlier, may have been inconsequential in the expansion of agriculture. From the seventh century onwards, inscriptions begin to pour in information of the transfer of waste plots to brāhmaṇas and folk heroes. The earliest example of this type comes from a late eighth century inscription from the Goribidnur taluk of Kolar district[77] which registers transfer of different kinds of land in four different villages to an enterprising brāhmaṇa. The transferred plots in each of the four villages included 12 *kaṇḍugas* of rice-land (*sāli-ādi-vapana-yogyam*), 30 *kudabas* of waste land (*murpaḷ*), 3 *kudabas* of homestead land (*gṛha kṣetram*), 2 *khaṇḍikas* of garden land (*toṭa-kṣetram*) and 30 *khaṇḍikas* for sowing millets (*priyaṅgu*) in addition to patches of forest tract. The transfer of *kṛta-akṛta* fields to brāhmaṇas also appears to be significant in this context.[78] The process of waste reclamation cannot be quantified to ascertain its impact on the overall progress of agriculture although it seems to have continued throughout the early middle ages. A late ninth century *vīragal* from the Sidlaghatta taluk of Kolar district refers to a villager whose brave acts in defence of the village were rewarded by 74 village elders who transferred 5 ploughs of rice land and 5 ploughs of waste land (*palu*) to the folk hero.[79] In another instance the nephew of a village-level chief received one *kaṇḍuga* of rice land and one *kaṇḍuga* of waste land as a reward for his heroic deeds in defence of the village.[80] The existence of regular plots of village waste is enough indication of a compulsion which induced the peasant folk and the ruling aristocracy alike to convert into cultivated plots whatever uncultivated lands were available within the village. A crisis point would be reached when all such scope for extending the arable within the village became exhausted and when any new provision of land would call for the extension of village lands into neighbouring forests and virgin tracts as already noticed.

To the initiative shown by brāhmaṇa freeholders and their feudal patrons, we may add the instances of the lords and their vassals undertaking excavation of tanks for reclaiming forest land and establishing new villages. Such examples do not however surface before the close of the ninth century and the beginning of the tenth.[81]

In the sphere of irrigation the most significant development was the large-scale introduction of animal-powered *araghaṭṭa*[82] for deep-well irrigation in northern and western India and of the sluice-weir device in tank irrigation in the peninsular region roughly from the seventh-eighth centuries onwards. Other devices which helped agricultural production during the period include substitution of the practice of rain-feeding of tanks by canal-feeding from nearby rivers, widening the network of irrigation channels by drawing water from tanks and rivers, and the multiplication of the rainfed irrigation tanks for bringing fresh land under cultivation in virgin tracts, forests and waste patches, and converting dry land in villages into rice producing wet fields.

We have argued elsewhere that the increasing demands on peasant surpluses following the extension of fiefdom and the growth of brāhmaṇa population between the sixth and eighth centuries forced a distinct change in the technique of irrigation[83] and is represented, in the peninsular region, by a shift of emphasis from lift-irrigation to drift-irrigation. The *Maduraikkāñci* reference to the noise of people who stood in rows to lift water from tanks with the help of baskets tied to well-sweeps and also with the help of bucket-pails softly made but strongly bound[84] does not leave any doubt about the prevalence of an archaic labour-intensive device of tank irrigation. These archaic techniques of surface irrigation continued down to Pallava times with slight modifications in the form of *picottah* which was used for lifting water from deep wells and rivers. The use of baskets in surface irrigation is also mentioned in Pallava inscriptions of the later period.[85] It was however during the Pallava period, particularly in the later part, that significant changes appear in the existing drainage technology. The earliest references to sluice-weir in channels drawing water from rivers as well as irrigation tanks occur in the records of the eighth-ninth centuries. The role of the tank management committee (*eri vāriya*), which is first mentioned in the inscriptions of the early ninth century, would also appear to be significant in this connection.[86] In Karnataka the first clear mention of tanks with sluice-weir devices is found in a Mulbagal taluk inscription of 750 which refers to the transfer of a plot of land below the sluice of a tank.[87] After the eighth century there is a profusion of references to sluice-tanks. Indeed the device became a marker of higher technology and agricultural progress in denser localities and settlements dominated by a powerful non-peasant class. The importance of sluice-tanks in raising agricultural output can be evidenced from the description of tanks with four channels and multiple sluices. The first clear mention of a multiple sluice tank is furnished by a Hiriyur taluk inscription of 890 which praises the farmers of a village for constructing a large tank and providing it with four sluices.[88] The reference to the northern sluice-weir of a tank in an inscription of 1080 would also suggest the existence of more than one such device in a single tank.[89]

Another hydraulic improvement relates to the construction of channels for feeding tanks from nearby rivers, a method which is first mentioned in a Pallava inscription of the late seventh century.[90] In Karnataka the earliest mention of a tank fed by river water is found in a Nanjangud taluk inscription of 904 which praises the enterprise of a brāhmaṇa freeholder of the Sthānaguṇḍūr *agrahāra* in excavating a massive tank which drew water from three rivulets emerging from a nearby forest.[91] Clearly the device reduced the dependence of the peasant folk on annual rainfall for filling their tanks.

Tank irrigation involved maintenance. We have inscriptional references to constant operations and repairs to breached tanks and broken sluices, which appear to have been damaged by excessive rainfall. At some places the problem was overcome by replacing earth-work by brick-work and stone-work undertaken by the farmers both individually and collectively in peasant villages and by fiefholders and freeholders in their respective domains. Sometimes repair was undertaken jointly by the lords and peasants and by peasants and brāhmaṇa freeholders. Such collaboration is also noticed between the overlord and the underlord. A late ninth century inscription of a Ganga king mentions the good work of a village level chief and two palace officials in constructing a new tank and its stone sluices.[92] In another example a *sāmanta* chief rebuilt a village tank by employing stone workers.[93] A late ninth century Hiriyur taluk inscription refers to the initiative of a peasant folk in excavating a large tank and its four channels in their village.[94] The work was rewarded by a locality chief who granted permanent sowing right on certain plots irrigated by the new tank. Transfer of plots irrigated by tanks or of the one-tenth part of the produce of the lands or grants of permanent sowing right in these plots appear to have financed the repairs to tanks and the silt clearing operations during the eighth-tenth centuries, but commercial credit funds were instituted for the same purpose in the eleventh century. The enterprise of individual merchants and merchant companies in the management of irrigation which can be noticed from the eleventh century onwards would also appear to be significant in this connection.[95]

Probably a much greater problem was to retain and increase the storage capacity of tanks by constant dredging operations and by raising the height of embankment. Several Pallava inscriptions of the ninth century mention the institution of agricultural credit and the apportionment of the products of certain lands to facilitate dredging operations.[96] In very large tanks boats were used for carrying the silt ashore.[97] The dredging of a tank was necessary as much to retain and increase storage capacity as to prevent tank-bursts from oversilting and excessive rainfall. In Karnataka villages the maintenance work was facilitated by grants of permanent sowing right (*bittuvaṭṭa*) on plots irrigated by tanks or the transfer of one-tenth part (*daśabandha*) of the produce from concerned irrigated lands. We do not however hear of the constitution of tank committees as in the neighbouring Tamil Nadu. This lack of organizational effort may partly account for the frequent instances of breached tanks and broken sluices. The weakness in tank management was sought to be compensated in some areas by constructing stone embankments and stone sluices wherever resources could be mobilized.

Increase in Crop Production

The main characteristics of increasing crop production during the early middle ages may be identified as expansion of wet cultivation, greater socialization of wild and marginally grown cereals and introduction of new food crops, vine-crops and garden products. The great expansion of wet cultivation has already been noticed in the previous section The effects of this development can be inferred from the additional surplus offering to non-producing consumers in the fiefs, freeholdings and temple *devadāna* holdings from the ninth century onwards. The multiplicity of rice-oblations (thrice daily) and apportionment of rice lands or the products of rice land to a large number of functionaries in the proliferate temple institutions appear to dominate the inscriptional material of the tenth and eleventh centuries. In some localities increased production of irrigated rice stimulated the process of long-distance commodity-exchange as we may notice from the descriptions of certain Arab travellers. Ibn Khurdabeh refers to the export of rice from certain parts of Andhra to Sarandib or Sri Lanka in the ninth century.[98] In most areas, however, the process of commodity-exchange picked up at a later date to judge from the large dumps of foodgrains, spices, garden products and vine crops in market places and also from the collection of heavy tolls on these goods; both these are fairly evident in the inscriptional records of the eleventh century.

Since a major portion of the increased rice crops was claimed by the multiplying feudal houses, brāhmaṇa freeholdings and temple institutions, some effort had to be made to supplement the staple food crops for the remaining population which too was increasing to judge from the growing density of rural settlements and foundation of new villages. The mandatory cultivation of major millet crops like *ragi* and greater patronage of inferior cereals which were earlier grown wild or in marginal plots would thus appear to be self-explanatory. The inferior cereals included different wild and uncultivated varieties of rice such as *śyāmka*, *nīvāra*, *kangu*, *kodrava* and *karadusa*. The millets included *priyaṅgu* (*Panicum Italicum*), *ragi* (*Eleusine Coracana*) or the finger millet, *jowar* (*Sorghum Vulgare*) or the great millet and *bajra* or buldush millet.

The earliest mention of *priyaṅgu* (*Panicum Italicum*) is found in the later Vedic literature[99] where it is considered an inferior cereal. The low reckoning of the grain is also noticed in the medical works of Caraka and Suśruta.[100] A change is discernible in the *Vāyu Purāṇa* which distinguishes *priyaṅgu* from *śyāmaka*, *nīvāra* and *karadusa* by stating that the former was cultivated cereal whereas the latter were grown wild.[101] Though the *Vāyu Purāṇa* is earlier than the *Suśruta Saṃhitā*, this particular chapter seems to be a later addition and may therefore indicate a socialization of wild cereals. This is also confirmed by epigraphic data which refers to the cultivation of *priyaṅgu* in certain localities. A late eighth century inscription from the Kolar taluk refers to *priyaṅgu* fields donated to a brāhmaṇa along with rice fields, garden lands and waste plots in four adjacent villages.[102] Another cereal crop patronized during the early middle ages was the foxtail millet (*kaṅgu*) of which there is neither any palaeobotanical evidence nor any references in the literature of the pre-Christian centuries In the beginning of the Christian era the grain is mentioned by Strabo and Diodorus.[103] In the *Aṣṭānga Saṃgraha*, a text of the seventh century, *kaṅgu* is described as an inferior grain along with *kodrava* and *śyāmaka*.[104] In a work of the ninth century *kaṅgu* is listed with *śyāmaka*, *nīvāra* and *kodrava*, the consumption of which is said to cause coughs, colds and gastric ailments.[105] Despite such disapproval *kaṅgu* appears to have been among the regularly cultivated food crops of the early middle ages though its consumption was limited to the poorer strata of the rural population. A Kadur district inscription mentions four *kaṇḍugas* or rice land (*vrihikṣetram*) and two *kaṇḍugas* of grain-field *kaṅgukśētram* as the share of a blacksmith who engraved a charter of land transfer to a Jaina *basadi*.[106] The *Mānasollasa* however suggests that by the close of the eleventh century *kaṅgu* had entered the royal and aristocratic household where a milk and sugar preparation of *kaṅgu* rice was greatly relished. This early twelfth century work authored by a western Cālukya king of Karnataka also praises similar milk and sugar preparations of *śyāmaka*, *nīvāra* and *gandhasāli*. The characterization of *kaṅgu*, *śyāmaka* and *nīvāra* as superior grains (*sutaṇḍula*)[107] is in sharp contrast with the earlier descriptions of the same varieties of rice as inferior grains or *kudhānya*.

The early popularity of bulrush millet in the peninsular region is evident from carbonized specimens of the grain from different neolithic and early historical sites in the area.[108] But during the historical period the crop remained confined mainly to the lower strata of the population. The Śangam works whose dates range between the third and the seventh centuries seem to associate the crop with people of the forest region and the pastoral folk. In the advanced agricultural tracts (*marudam*) it was no more than a marginal crop.[109] The impression is confirmed by the absence of any reference to *jowar* till the beginning of the Christian era when Caraka refers to the *sorghum vulgare*. In the peninsular region however there is no reference to this millet in either Sanskrit or Prakrit literature till the sixth-seventh centuries. Thereafter one can observe a spate of references in literature and inscriptions.[110] By the eleventh century *jowar* had earned considerable access to the higher strata of the population and was being produced on a large scale to infer from references to *jowar* shops and *jowar* merchants in the inscriptions of the eleventh-twelfth centuries.[111]

Ragi (*Eleusine Coracana*), also known as the finger millet, seems to be a native of Karnataka despite suggestions about its migration from Africa.[112] *Ragi* is Kannada term which is retained in a modified form in neighbouring languages (Tamil *ragi*, Telugu *ragulu*, Marathi, Gujarati *nagli*),[113] and the largest area under *ragi* cultivation is also in Karnataka.[114] The discovery of the carbonized specimens of *ragi* along with its wild progenitor from neolithic Hallur (c.1800BC)[105] might also support the independent origin of the crop in the Karnataka region from where it appears to have spread to Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. As the hardiest crop most suited to dry farming and of great nutritive value and with storage capacity up to fifty years the *ragi* millet appears to have been of considerable help in neutralizing the effects of growing scarcity of staple food crops in the poorer section of population for which it still continues as staple food. The mandatory cultivation of *ragi* may thus have been forced on the peasant in order to free the rice crop for consumption in temples and feudal houses. A late tenth century inscription from the Sorab taluk registers the order of a *mahāsāmanta* lord which states that if any land under *ragi* cultivation in the Gede-12 locality remained waste which all the chief farmers in the district were to pay fines and undergo punishments.[116] Gede-12, it may be mentioned, was one of the eight estates of the *mahāsāmanta* chief whose order is recorded here. A thirteenth century Paṇḍya inscription also shows that *ragi* was under extensive cultivation.[117]

Sugarcane

The cultivation of sugarcane was introduced into the peninsular region by the ancestors of Adigamān Neḍumān Anji.[118] According to *Puṛanānūṛu*, Tamil poem of the third century AD, Adigamān was one of the last seven Maravar chiefs who were known for their philanthropic work. Going by the date of the *Puṛanānūṛu* the ancestors of Adigamān can be safely placed in the first-second centuries AD. Howerver, the crop was quickly assimilated into the plant economy. For, the same poem mentions the popularity of sugarcane in a later passage (392). This is also evident from the *Paṭṭinapālai* (1-10) which refers to lush green and never failing fields of sugarcane by the side of spacious tanks. The *Paṭṭinapālai*[119], which is assigned to the third century, however suggests that in the earliest stage of its adoption sugar working was one of the many activities of the agriculturist who extracted juice from the sugarcane by some improvised device and boiled it in vats set in the harvested field. The description of waste water flowing from these vats into adjoining fields and making the standing crops pale and fade away only highlights the crude nature of sugar working in early Tamil Nadu villages. At a later stage the manufacture of jaggery appears to have shifted from the peasants' hands to professional artisans who worked archaic sugar-presses in village huts and sold both sugarcane juice and crystal sugar to customers who approached these huts.[120] The *Gāthāsaptaśatī* reference[121] to the owner-operators of sugarcane presses who took a portion of the manufacture as the cost of their labour also points in the same direction. This may have facilitated the commodity-production of jaggery and crystal sugar of which the inscriptions provide unmistakable evidence from the tenth century onwards.

Betel-leaves and Arecanuts

Some crops which were of a marginal utility till the beginning of the feudal era, but their cultivation rapidly expanded on account of evolving social manners and temple ritual requirements include betel-leaves and arecanuts. The absence of *tāmbūla* (betel-leaf) and *guvaka/puga* (arecanuts) in the literature of pre-Christian era would show that the two articles were not used on any scale till at least the beginning of the Christian era when these may have entered the Indian market as imports from the countries of their origin.[122] It may have taken the two imported items another two to three centuries to enter the agricultural sector.

The *Pattuppāṭṭu* evidence would suggest that marginal cultivation of arecanut had begun in the peninsular region about the fifth-sixth centuries[123] to judge from references to fields of areca palm together with those of coconuts, plantains, sugarcane and ginger. A more positive evidence is furnished by the inscriptional records of the early middle ages. A Gubbi taluk inscription of 812[124] mentions tall betel plants in the boundary description of a village transferred to a Jain temple.

This slow pace of adoption is in contrast with the numerous instances of the creation and donation of betel-vines and areca-gardens to temples in the inscriptions of the eleventh-twelfth centuries. A comparative analysis of temple offerings in the closing centuries of the first millennium and those noticed in the eleventh century and later at once shows the great demand for betel-leaves and arecanuts in mandatory temple rituals. The earlier oblations comprised boiled rice, incense (camphor) and perfumes (sandal paste). But the later documents invariably mention both betel-leaves and arecanuts. Even a peripheral view of the inscriptional literature shows that the enormity of temple's demands had transformed articles of marginal utility into essential commodities produced in marketable quantities. The social factor also deserves consideration. Abu Zaid, an Arab chronicler of the early tenth century, refers to betel offering as a token of honour and friendship.[125] An inscription of Rājarāja Coḷa mentions the old custom of exchanging *tāmbūla*.[126] Chou-Ju-Kua, an early twelfth century Chinese traveller, refers to the popularity of betel-chewing among kings[127] and nobles. The betel-leaf and arecanut also owed their new-found status to their medicinal properties. Alberuni noticed that the Indians ate betel-leaves with lime after dinner to strengthen their power of digestion while the chewing of betel-nut acted as an astringent on the teeth gums and stomach.[128]

The growth of cottage industries which centred round large-scale production of arecanut is evident from the inscriptional records of the tenth-eleventh centuries. An Arsikere taluk inscription of the eleventh century mentions details regarding the harvesting and processing of arecanuts done by two different classes of workers. The *koylāsis* were the people who harvested the crop while the wholesale dealers or *mottakāras* were associated with the processing of arecanuts for the market.[129]

Coconut and Orange

Of the fruit crops turned into commodity-production, coconuts and oranges deserve special mention. Of the two fruits, cocount entered the temple rituals and social customs earlier and in a much bigger way, but oranges do not appear in the orchards of peninsular South till the eleventh century. Indeed the orange never attained even a semblance of ritual and social status which the coconuts, betel-leaves and arecanuts acquired with the growth of social customs and expansion of temple institutions. The coconut, like the betel-leaves and betel-nuts, was introduced into the peninsular region[130] about the beginning of the Christian era or a little earlier. The nutritive value of the fruit helped its quicker adoption.

The orange is mentioned for the first time in Indian literature about the first Christian century. The medical work of Caraka enumerates a long list of fruits many of which were introduced for the first time. Orange or *nāgaraga* (Hindi *nārangī*) is one of these new arrivals. The fruit does not however find a place in Suśruta's enumeration of best fruits which includes grapes, dates, pomegranates and myrobalan. These references do not however suggest that orange was cultivated on any scale in the subcontinent. It appears that the fruit was a native of Kashmir and remained confined to the valley till its extensive patronage by the feudal aristocratic families towards the close of the first millennium. The diffusion of orange cultivation in the peninsular region, which is vividly described by the inscriptional records of the tenth-eleventh centuries, can be attributed to the requirements of dainties in feudal culinary. Probably this is evident from the raising of a lusty orange crop in the exclusive domains of feudal lords. A Sorab inscription of 1172 refers to Elambaḷḷi which was a *vṛtti* (fief) and a jewel of the Nagarkhanda-*nāḍ* well known for its betel-vines and the fruits of areca-palms and orange-trees (*nāranga*).[131] That Elambaḷḷi was a prosperous feudal estate is evident from contemporary inscriptions. Probably orange cultivation in the locality began at the initiative of a merchant who earlier purchased the *vṛtti* ostensibly by paying the required price to its peasant owner but actually occupying the fief by fraudulent methods. Another prosperous locality where orange was grown about the same time was also the domain of a *daṇḍanāyaka* lord. An inscription of 1217 refers to this district as Jiduling kampana with orange and plantain groves and areca-palm which meet overhead and create a shade.[132]

Towards the close of the millennium orange cultivation was introduced into the Arab-Islamic heartland. Al-Masudi writes that after 300 A.H. (A.D. 915) the orange tree was imported from India and planted in Oman. Since Oman was the chief port which dealt with Indian products and was closer to south India, the diffusion of orange might have been from south India, particularly Karnataka whose orange cultivation began well before the tenth century and which formed the heart of Rāṣṭrakūṭa (Balhara of the Arab traders) kingdom where the merchant entrepreneurs from the Islamic lands received great encouragement. Probably early south Indian oranges were grown in limited family gardens of feudal chiefs, and commodity-production of the fruit reported in the inscriptions of the eleventh century picked up with the Arabs showing interest in this fruit. From Oman the plant was taken to al-Basra and al-Iraq, and it became plentiful in the houses of Taursus, Antioch and the Syrian coast of Palestine and in Egypt where it was unknown before. The fine fragrance and the beautiful colour which it had in India however disappeared.[133]

Though commodity-production of food crops was mainly the consequence of internal contradictions of the early feudal order, the commercial production of luxury goods was as much the result of internal demands of temples and feudal households as it was of the rising demands for Indian goods in international markets. The re-development of India's international trade in luxuries and prestige goods was set in motion by the Arab traders who used India both as an entrepot in world-wide exchange of commodities and as the producer of these goods. The market in luxuries, particularly spices, had also expanded considerably since the days of the Roman empire. The demand for spices was no longer confined to the upper strata of the society, but had become a normal feature of the people's diet in Europe, west Asia and China. The market of black pepper, which was a monopoly of the west coast of India, was fast developing, with China as the major consumer. In the city of Kinsay alone the inhabitants consumed pepper at the rate of 10,000 pounds a day, all of which came from India.[134] The ship-loads of coarse spices which went in the direction of the Persian Gulf and Alexandria did not account even for one-tenth of those sent to China.[135] Indian ginger, which in earlier times did not figure in the foreign markets, was sold at a very high price in the markets of medieval Europe.[136] The export of ginger is mentioned by Marco Polo, Nicolo Conti and Vasco de Gama.[137] Perhaps the clinching evidence of commodity-production of cereal crops, garden crops, spices and prestige goods is furnished by a Shikarpur taluk inscription of 1150 [38] which refers to large dumps of these articles in separate market-streets and the collection of specified amounts of coined money in the denominations of *hāga*, *vīsa* and *paṇa* on each of these commodities. Some of the more important items, besides the different varieties of grain brought in as head loads, cartloads and bullock loads, were mustard seed, cumin seeds, coriander, dry ginger, green ginger, long pepper, black pepper, sugar and sugar-candy, cardamoms, turmeric, camphor, murk sandal and saffron pearls and drugs and roots of medicinal value. The inscription refers to foreign merchants, local merchants, cloth merchants, gold merchants, betel merchants and flower-merchants who specialized in the sale and purchase of these different commodities. A Bagewadi taluk (Dharwar district) inscription of the twelfth century makes copious references to tolls collected in cash and kind from various groups of merchants and artisans in the Maningavaḷḷi (Managoli) *agrahāra*.[139] The inscription refers to taxes collected from gold merchants, guilds of weavers, guilds of oilmen, toddy sellers, dairy merchants and others.

Crisis and Conflict

In the early growth of rural economy some measure of collaboration among the new classes of surplus-appropriators, the fief-holders and the temple *devadāna* holders was as much essential as it was unavoidable. During the earlier phase the chief purpose of such interdependence was to increase crop production in their respective agricultural domains, the efforts being mainly concerned with the extension of the cultivable area and developments of the drainage network. However, the roots of conflict also lay in these acts of collaboration and interdependence. Tensions began to surface as the production of peasant goods fell short of the rising and over-lapping claims of non-peasant surplus appropriators in the fiefs, free-holdings and temple *devadāna* holdings besides the emerging towns.[140] In some localities the crisis appears to have been aggravated by famines and epidemics but in most areas it was the effect of feudal depredations which put the production machinery out of gear for some time. Burning down of the whole villages and standing crops, and armed attacks against brāhmaṇa freeholdings and peasant villages for collection of dues and rents are very much in evidence during the opening centuries of the second millennium.

The epigraphic records would suggest that there were conflicts between the brāhmaṇas and feudal lords, between brāhmaṇa freeholders of neighbouring villages and between the peasant villages and their feudal lords.

Brāhmaṇa-Peasant Conflicts

The conflicts which involved the brāhmaṇas and the peasants seem to highlight the resentment of the old resident peasantry against the encroachment on the traditional rights in land and other forms of property in their villages by non-cultivating brāhmaṇa families imposed over them. A Karnataka inscription of 1251 refers to the *gauḍa* peasants of a village who protested against the conversion of their village into a brāhmaṇa freeholding and refused to accept the new landlords. Hearing this the enraged king sent an army which pillaged the village, defiled women and attacked even children.[141] Protests over the destruction of common property and infringement of communal right are also reported. A Hassan taluk inscription of 1230 mentions the death of two *gauḍa* peasants of a village who tried to prevent the agents of brāhmaṇas from cutting palmyra trees in their village.[142] A Telugu Coḷa inscription from the Anantpur district of Andhra Pradesh refers to the forcible occupation of *uṁbaḷi* lands by the brāhmaṇa of a village. The three *gauḍa* families which were the rightful owners of these lands resolved to assault the brāhmaṇa usurpers and to provide compensation in the event of the death of any *gauḍa* hero in the fight with the brāhmaṇas. The inscription reports the killing of two *gauḍa* peasants by the defending brāhmaṇa landlords.[143]

Violence and bloodshed also resulted from disputes over the control of irrigation tanks. A Hassan taluk inscription of 1212[144] records a fight between the peasants of a village and a fiefholder of the locality for the possession of an irrigation tank. The fight resulted in the killing of the chief whereupon the Hoysaḷa king ordered the construction of a new tank and a *vīragal* set up to commemorate the death. Evidently the fiefholder failed to take possession of the disputed tank and instead a new tank was built by the Hoysaḷa overlord as an act of favour to the family of the departed chief. Another Hassan taluk inscription of 1080 relates to the dispute between a brāhmaṇa family and a peasant family of a village over the drawing of water from a village tank. In the fight which followed a member of the peasant's family was killed.[145] The dead was buried at the spot and the dispute resolved by dividing the water of the tank into two equal shares.

It is significant that although peasant action was generally in defence of their traditional land right sometimes it was aimed at capturing brāhmaṇa land in the same village or in a neighbouring one. A Telugu-Coḷa inscription from Andhra Pradesh[146] refers to the *gauḍa* cultivators who deserted their village Inombrolu on the outbreak of plague and settled down in a neighbouring brāhmaṇa village on the condition that they would pay an agreed compensation to the brāhmaṇa landlords. Subsequently the brāhmaṇas themselves fled their village on the outbreak of famine. Later when conditions improved in the countryside the 52 brāhmaṇas went back to their village and asked the immigrant cultivators for payment of the agreed amount of compensation which was promptly refused. The brāhmaṇas then appealed to the king who asked the peasants to pay the amount.

Resorting to violence for redress of grievances could not however be a matter of choice for the Indian peasant who lived under the gripping influence of a brāhmaṇa dominated ideology and in habitual subservience to brāhmaṇical norms of social discrimination. The peasant in traditional India was thus incapable of combining into a common action across distant localities; he was still less capable of any thought of changing the old order. Necessarily, the sporadic incidents of peasant protest remained isolated attempts to counter abuses of landlords. Nevertheless significant, these instances underline the rising impatience of old resident peasantry with an intruder intermediary class which had long been encroaching on the peasant's traditional land rights and communal property in villages. In an age when a part of peasant goods was being earmarked for the market and also when the peasant was collaborating with an enterprising trading class in the foundation of new markets and towns, the presence of a large and oppressive surplus-appropriating class in advanced peasant localities must have been particularly odious to the enterprising peasants.

Sāmanta-Brāhmaṇa Conflicts

The rising demand and rigorous collections of rents, dues and tributes which constituted the chief support of the state would also point towards a situation in which the existence of a large number of rent-free holdings was a serious detriment to the fiscal resources of the state. Not surprisingly, the sanctimonious pockets of brāhmaṇical authority which had long been nourished by kings and feudal lords were becoming targets of armed attack from the same class of patrons. That the freeholdings were increasingly being subjected to the rental demand of the state is amply clear from the flight of brāhmaṇa landholders from *caturvedīmaṅgalam* on failure to pay rents, their plots being subsequently redistributed among new holders or sold out to temples.[147] The quest for fixed annual rent from the freeholdings may have been prompted by the fact that through constant sale of *agrahāra* land and collections of fines and other dues in cash from peasant communities the freeholders were in possession of a liquid capital of which the state wanted a share to replenish its requirements of minted money. The brāhmaṇas' refusal to pay rents and dues incited the wrath of the kings and feudatories who attacked the concerned villages and forced brāhmaṇas to pay the demanded rent. A Sorab taluk inscription of 1177 refers to a feudatory Gāvuṇḍasvāmī Daṇḍanātha who attacked the immemorial *agrahāra* of Kuppaṭūr and like an *asura* destroyed the sacrifices of brāhmaṇas and defiled women. In retaliation the brāhmaṇas of Kuppaṭūr captured a few of the attackers, the infuriated Daṇḍanātha sought reinforcements from a friendly chief, Haḍu Deva of Ucchangi fort. Helped by the reinforcements, the Daṇḍanātha surrounded the village in three circles, pillaging it and destraining its cattle, liberating the captured followers and forcing the brāhmaṇas to pay the fixed annual rent. It is pertinent to remember here that while the freeholdings did not pay anything to the state, the brāhmaṇas freely extended the agricultural boundary in the outlying forests and virgin lands enhancing the possibility of higher annual rent if it was collected. The village Kuppaṭūr which was attacked in 1177 by a feudatory must have been doing this for a long time. In 1071 the brāhmaṇas authorized a *seṭṭi* to clear a part of the nearby forest, excavate a large tank and constitute rice-fields around it [148] Such an enrichment of freeholdings was unlikely to be relished by the neighbouring chiefs, and only four years later the *agrahāra* was attacked by an army led by twelve *nāyaka* commanders. The *seṭṭi* benefactor of Kuppaṭūr brāhmaṇas who fought on this occasion lost his life.[149] Similarly extension of agricultural boundary into neighbouring villages gave rise to violent conflicts between brāhmaṇas and peasants. Kuppaṭūr itself was involved in two such conflicts between 1141 and 1143.[150] Encroachment on neighbouring pastures also led to frequent violent incidents. One Shimoga district inscription refers to the cattle of a brāhmaṇa village straying into a neighbouring village and grazing there. The angry chief, of whose domain the village appears to have formed a part, immediately attacked the Kumbise freehold and killed two defenders on the side of the brāhmaṇas.[151] Instances of violence against brāhmaṇa freeholdings is also widely reported from the neighbouring Tamil Nadu. In one case the brāhmaṇas of a *brahmadeya* were tortured by a feudal lord who drowned them in water, scorched them in the sun and finally imprisoned them. Unable to stand all this torture and humiliation they managed to escape with the help of escorts and report the matter to the king at Thanjavur.[152] However, in contrast to the meekly holders of *brahmadeya* land the *agrahāra* freeholders in Karnataka had grown into a position of considerable armed resistance. With fortified settlements and small rural militias, many of these villages gave a tough fight to the attacking armies of kings and feudal lords. This would also explain a decline in the patronage of these rural bastions of brāhmaṇa power.

Forcible Collection of Rent

In the context of an emergent market-economy of towns which called for a resurrection of the state's role in economy,[153] the revenues of the state appear to have been in a precarious condition forcing the necessity of an armed collection drive. In different cases, these expeditions were prompted by the appropriations of rent by ambitious rival chiefs, misappropriation by local officers and unwillingness or the inability of peasants to pay the apportioned rent dues. A Sorab taluk inscription of 1112 refers to a *mahāmaṇḍaleśvara* chief ordering his army to collect tributes from the Hayve locality.[154] A junior commander is stated to have been killed in the engagement that followed. A late twelfth century inscription from the same area mentions a Kalacuri king who ordered his two generals to launch a rent-collection (*siddhāya*) drive in the district (*nāḍ*) of Banavāsi.[155] Although the widespread peasant revolts were yet far off, some of the violent incidents seem to anticipate the common militant action of peasants and landlords which underlined all major conflagration of the late middle ages. The refusal of the district headmen (*naḷgāvuṇḍas*) to deposit the collected amount of rent and the dispatch of an army to punish them and realize the amount[156] approximate an early fourteenth century peasant uprising described by Barani in which the *muqaddams* (headmen) of the Doab region collected the *khots* (peasants) around them and resisted oppressive collections of enhanced land-tax in 1330.[157] The oppressive collections of rents, taxes, and dues sometimes forced the peasants and artisans to combine in common action against the state. A Vijayanagar inscription of 1351 from Vridhachalam in the South Arcot district registers an agreement between the *Valangai* peasants and small trading castes and the *Iḍangai* artisan castes to jointly resist the forcible collection of tax by government officers. The members of the two factions resolved to inflict corporal punishment on those who helped the tax collectors of the king and the brāhmaṇa landholders in the collection of taxes by coercive measures. The same punishment was also laid down for all those who consented to write the accounts of revenue.[158] A Mayavaram taluk (Thanjavur district) inscription of the time of Devarāya I records a similar agreement between the *Valangai* 98 castes and the *Iḍangai* 98 castes to resist oppressive and illegal collections of the *Iḍangavari* and *Ināvari* from the members of the two factions.[159] The coming together of the *Valangai* and *Iḍangai* subdivisions, whose violent and bloody conflicts are too well-known to be mentioned, cannot but highlight the growing incompatibility of interests between the landowning and surplus-appropriating classes on the one hand and the producing-paying classes on the other.

Much more significant than the sporadic risings and acts of resistance were the formation of new social alliances and rise of protestant sects. Significantly, it was in eleventh century that the supra caste unions of *Valangai* peasants and *Iḍangai* artisans make the first appearance. Most of the *Valangai* and *Iḍangai* during the eleventh-twelfth century are reported from the lower Kaveri basin, which is said to have witnessed social turmoil in the wake of the expansion of private farms of rich landlords and the dispossession of the old resident peasantry of their *kāṇi* rights.[160] That these mobilizations of peasant and artisan castes across peasant localities were aimed against the oppressions of a powerful landlord class emerging from the fiefs, freeholdings and temple *devadāna* holdings is not concealed by the overstated incidents of violence between the *Valangai* and *Iḍangai* themselves.

The growing impatience of the peasants with the exploiter landlord class is also evident from the formation of the Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta sect during the twelfth century which was characterized by the domination of Veḷḷāla peasants in prebendary organization and the adoption of Tamil language in preference to Sanskrit as the basis of religious praxis. The attempts of the brāhmaṇas to capture the monastic establishments of the Śaiva Siddhānta and prevent its futher growth[161] would appear significant in this connection.

In Karnataka, the artisans' quest for occupational security and status-relief assumed the form of a powerful religious upsurge known as the Vīraśaiva movement, the chief supporters of which were traders, artisans and peasants led by a few disaffected *smārta* brāhmaṇas of Karnataka.[162] The sect which originated in the north-western region of Karnataka about the twelfth century was the product of a social situation in which the revival of commodity-production had considerably added to the importance of trading and artisan castes but whose profits and interests were constantly subjected to infringement by brāhmaṇas and temples. Understandably therefore there is no place in the Vīraśaiva sect for traditional brāhmaṇa priesthood or temple-centric cults of brāhmaṇical deities. The anti-brāhmaṇical character of the sect is also evident from its opposition to the conventional ordering of the social structure on the basis of caste endogamy. The early Vīraśaivas were in fact an undifferentiated fraternal community although later it became vulnerable to brāhmaṇical norms of social differentiation.[163]

We have tried to present an outline of the growth of rural economy and indicated the internal contradictions inherent in it. Although this study relates to south India, the situation may not have been basically different in other parts of the country in early medieval times. But more regional studies would be necessary to examine this hypothesis.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1] The outright rejection by Marx of a feudal development in India was influenced by his conviction in the existence of the Asiatic mode of production. But the Asiatic mode construct was itself heavily indebted to the traditional European commentary on Asian history and society, "the continuity being emphasised by Marx's repeated assertions about the stagnation and immutability" of the Oriental World. This is besides the fact that in a 'conceptual slippage' the Asiatic mode of production was applied to non-Asian American societies of Mexico and Peru (Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolute State*, London, 1977, pp. 476 & 477-78). For hesitant views of Marx on the absence of private property in land, the 'real key' to the oriental society and one of the main constituents of the Asiatic mode of production, see R.A.H.L. Gunawardana. "The Analysis of Pre-Colonial Social Formations in Asia in the Writings of Karl Marx", *IHR*, 11, no. 2, 372-73.

[2] For a Hegelian ring in emphasizing the stagnating (or stabilizing) influence of the caste system (*The Philosophy of History*, London, 1878, p. 168), see Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus*, Delhi, 1970, p. 218; for a criticism, see Suvira Jaiswal, "Caste in the Socio-economic Framework of Early India", *Presidential Address* (Ancient Indian Section), 38th Indian History Congress, Bhuvaneshwar, 1977. For the idea of constant factor in hydraulic technology of early India, see Burton Stein, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*, Delhi, 1980, p. 24.

[3] Some of the more important writings are R. S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism*, Calcutta, 1965; D. D. Kosambi, *The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical Outline*, Delhi, 1972, Ch. 7 and "Origins of Feudalism in Kashmir", *JBBRAS*, the Sardhaśatābdi Commemoration Volume, 1956-60, pp. 108-20; *SCNI*, chapters ii-vi, and "The Problem of the Emergence of Feudal Relations in Early India", *Presidential Address* (Ancient India Section), 41st Indian History Congress, Bombay, 1980; T. V. Mahalingam. "The Genesis and Nature of Feudalism under the Pallavas of Kanchi", paper presented to the seminar on "Socio-Economic Formations in the Early Middle Ages C.A.D. 600-1200", Allahabad University, Allahabad, 1980; R. N. Nadi, "Feudalization of the State in Medieval South India". *Social Science Probings* i, no. 1, March 1984, 33-59. For a useful historiographical sketch, see D. N. Jha, "Early Indian Feudalism: A Historiographical Critique", *Presidential Address* (Ancient India Section), 40th Indian History Congress, Waltair, 1979. For some dissenting opinions, see D.C. Sircar, *Landlordism and Tenancy in Ancient and Medieval India as Revealed by Epigraphical Records*, Lucknow, 1969; Harbans Mukhia, "Was There Feudalism in Indian History?", *Presidential Address* (Medieval India Section), 40th Indian History Congress, Waltair, 1979. For a criticism of D. D. Kosambi's views on feudalism in India, see Irfan Habib, "Distribution of Landed Property in Pre-British India", *Indian Society: Historical Probings*, ed. R. S. Sharma and V. Jha, Delhi, 1974. pp. 275-82.

[4] Some of the more important sites which passed into state of decay from the close of the third century are Chandravalli, Brahmagiri, Hemmige and Badaga-Madhopur in Karnataka, Kolhapur in Maharashtra, Kondapur, Maski and Amaravati in Andhra Pradesh, Sishupalgarh in Orissa and Arikamedu, Tirukampuliyar and Alagarai in Tamil Nadu, see Y. D. Sharma, "Exploration of Historical Sites", *Ancient India*, 9, 116-69, also *Ancient India*, nos 2, 4 and 5, H. D. Sankalia, *Excavations in Brahmapuri* 1946-47 (Poona, 1952), *Excavations at Hemmige*, (Mysore, 1974); T. V. Mahalingam, *Excavations in the Lower Kaveri Valley 1962-64* (Madras, 1975); also Om Prakash Prasad, "Towns in Early Medieval Karnataka: AD 600-1200", Ph. D. thesis, Patna University, 1980, ch. VII; R. S. Sharma, "Decay of Gangetic Towns", *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 33rd session (Mazaffarpur 1972). For some social consequences of the decay of towns, R. N. Nandi, "Client, Ritual and Conflict in Early Brāhmaṇical Order", *IHR*, vi, nos. 1 & 3, 63-118. For a detailed commentary on the subject, R. S. Sharma, *Town and Country in the Early Middle Ages* (forthcoming), also V. K. Thakur, *Urbanization in Ancient India*, Delhi, 1982, pp. 261 ff; Kameshwar Prasad, *Cities, Crafts and Commerce under the Kuṣāṇas*, Delhi, 1988, ch. VI.

[5] While most of the brāhmaṇas left their urban homes in quest of a secure livelihood those who remained tried to revive the values of gift-exchange by proclaiming decaying towns as places of pilgrimage and formulating a whole series of gift-sharing rituals (R. N. Nandi, "Client, Ritual and Conflict in Early Brāhmaṇical Order", op. cit.) The epic and purāṇic descriptions of the Kali age, which bear witness to widespread political anarchy and social destabilization between third and sixth centuries, would appear to be significant in this context, see R. S. Sharma, "The Kali Age, A Period of Social Crisis", in S N. Mukherjee ed , *India: History and Thought* (Essays in honour of Professor A. L. Basham), Calcutta, 1982, pp, 186-203 and B.N.S. Yadava, "The Accounts of the Kali Age and the Social Transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages", *IHR*, v, nos. 1 & 2, 31-63. It would also appear that while the epics and early purāṇic records lay stress on the disintegration of the social economy, the middle and late purāṇic sources are preoccupied with the consolidation of a subsistence-based agrarian economy. The rural orientation of the gift-sharing rituals and, in conformity with this, the gripping concern of purāṇic authors with the preservation and multiplication of agricultural inputs-fields, live stock and irrigational networks are also characteristic of the growing ruralization of a surplus-demanding class. The purāṇic prescriptions for mandatory gifts of cultivable land, farm cattle, ploughs and sources of irrigation also fall in line with the more dependable epigraphical data on the subject.

[6] "Feudalization of the State in Medieval South India", op. cit , pp. 33-59.

[7] *Memorial Stones*, ed, S. Settar and Gunther D. Sontheimer, Dharwar, 1982, pp. 311-12.

[8] R.N. Nandi, "Feudalization of the State in Medieval South India",

op. cit. Variant categories of seigneurial rights accompanying grants of land to different categories of people were widely known in Western European feudal development particularly in France. Marc Bloch, *Slavery and Serfdom in Middle Ages*, London, 1975, p. 100.

[9] *Infra*, The Techniques of Agriculture.

[10] Georges Duby, *The Early Growth of European Economy*, London, 1979, p. 181. Duby views population growth as an undercurrent which is impossible to observe. This is because of the nature of documentary evidence, which precludes any attempt to measure the scale of population growth except in England where statistical data of exceptional value is available during the 'last third of the eleventh century'.

[11] C. Minakshi, *Administration and Social Life under the Pallavas*, Madras, 1938, pp. 120-24. The earliest epigraphic references to *sabhā*, *ūr* and *nāḍu* are found in the inscriptions of Nandivarman Pallavamalla (731-95).

[12] B. P Mazumdar, "Collective Landgrants in Early Medieval Inscriptions (*c*. 960-1200 AD)", *JASB*, x (1968), 1-17. The study shows that of the 29 collective grants 6 belonged to the seventh century and 20 to the eleventh-twelfth centuries probably coinciding with the preparatory and breakthrough stages in the growth of rural economy.

[13] *EC*, v. no. 10.

[14] Compare *EC*, vii, Shikarpur 45 (b) and 47.

[15] *EC*, vii, Shikarpur 263. From the name Sahalatavi the donated village appears to have been carved out of a forest (*atavi*) tract in the Malnad region of the district before it was constituted into a freeholding.

[16] *EC*, vii, Shikarpur 264. *EC*, vii, Shikarpur 20 of AD 400 mentions 20 *nivartanas* of land donated by a sub-king to his *guru* or preceptor.

[17] *EC*, vii, Shikarpur 45(b). Several of these villages were managed by large-sized brāhmaṇa assemblies consisting of 1000 members on an average

[18] *EC*, Vii, Shikarpur 47.

[19] A Bowringpet taluk inscription of 944 refers to the brāhmaṇas of a freehold village who undertook to feed all those people who had no one to support them, *EC*, x, Bowringpet 2. An earlier record from the same area refers to brāhmaṇas of a 'locality as binding themselves to feed 20 persons who arrived separately every month in search of food, *EC*, x, Bowringpet 1, AD 900.

[20] R. N. Nandi, "Origin and Nature of Saivite Monasticism", *Indian Society; Historical Probings*, ed, R. S. Sharma and V. Jha, New Delhi, 1974.

[21] *EC*, xii, Sira 38, AD 878.

[22] That a temple complex could not by itself sustain urban life is evident also from later instances like Halebidu in South Karnataka. Halebidu, once a prosperous Hoyasaḷa capital, was reduced to an obseure village after the decline of the Hoyasaaḷs despite its imposing network of stone masonary temples. If at some places the towns dis-

continue in a reduced form after the withdrawal of political patronage it could not have been solely because of religious activities, as has been supposed , see R. Champaklakshmi, "Growth of Urban Centres in South India: Kudamukku and Palaivarai—the Twin Cities of the Cholas", *Studies in History*, i, no. 1, 1-29. Probably the whole problem awaits a classificatory study of medieval towns to judge which towns depended on subsistence production and which ones on commodity production of crops and accordingly which functional groups dominated these places.

[23] Burton Stein, op. cit., p. 243.

[24] K.A.N. Sastri, *Cholavamsa* (Hindi), Delhi, 1979, pp. 442-45.

[25] *EC*, ix, Channapatna 92.

[26] *ARMAD*, 1935, pp. 12-14.

[27] *EC*, ix, Channapatna 88, AD 1014; these three new temples were the Śri Kailaśam Śiva temple, the Apprameya Swāmī Viṣṇu temple and the Durge temple.

[28] *ARMAD*, 1935 no. 26, pp. 92-98.

[29] *EC*, ix, Coorg SO.

[30] Ibid ix, Channapatna 42a, AD 1007.

[31] Cf. ibid viii, Sorab 389 of AD 1172 and Sorab 387 of AD 1241.

[32] Ibid. x, Srinivaspur 29, AD 920; *EC*, XI, Koppa 143, AD 1066.

[33] Ibid. ix, Bangalore 100.

[34] Ibid ix, Devanahalli 26.

[35] Ibid. v, no. 3-C, AD 1178.

[36] *EI*, v, no. 3A, 1.42.

[37] Ibid.

[38] *EC*, ix, Kankanhalli 71, AD 1259.

[39] *ARMAD*, 1932, no. 21, p. 177, AD 1012. The two *gauḍa* (peasant) families lived in a village of the Chikmaglur taluk.

[40] Noboru Karashima, *South Indian History and Society*, Delhi, 1984, p. 31.

[41] Ibid, p. 30.

[42] Compare *EC*, ix, Devanapalli 75 and 76.

[43] *IF*, p. 57.

[44] Harbans Mukhia, "Was There Feudalism in Indian History?" *Presidential Address*, Section II, Medieval India, 40th Indian History Congress, Waltair 1979. For a criticism see R.S. Sharma "How Feudal Was Indian Feudalism?", *Social Scientist*, xii, no. 2, (Feb. 1984) 14-16.

[45] Maurice Dobb, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism* (first published 1946), Sixth Impression, London, 1954, pp. 35-36. It may be pertinent to mention that the feudal mode of production never existed in a pure state anywhere in medieval Europe. Probably, the feudal formation can be better understood as a composite system in which other modes of production survived and intertwined with feudalism proper. For, in the core region of European feudalism a balanced synthesis of the Roman and Germanic elements occurred, see Perry Anderson, *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism*, London, 1978, p. 155.

[46] Maurce Dobb, op. cit., 35.

[47] For a good study of new literary material on the subject, see B. N. S. Yadava, "The Problem of the Emergence of Feudal Relations in Early India", op. cit.
Indian History Congress, Bombay, 1980.

[48] The growth of forced labour between the fourth and seventh centuries (G. K. Rai, "Forced Labour in Ancient India," *IHR*, iii, no. 1. p. 26) and increase in the oppressive character of forced labour from the Gupta period in north India (D. N. Jha. *Revenue System in the Post-Maurya and Gupta Times*, Calcutta, 1969, p. 19) would appear significant in this connection.

[49] *Avali nāḍ prabhu kama Gau lana besa vega Nagana* or Washerman Nagana who was the bond servant of the *nāḍ prabhu* Kama Gauḍa of Avali, *EC*v, iii, Sorab 128, AD 1288.

[50] *EC*, viii, Sorab 131, AD 1159.

[51] Ibid. viii, Sorab 10, AD 800.

[52] *Bandugiyar* may be a Kannada term derived from Sanskrit *bandhaka* meaning bound or mortgaged.

[53] *EC*, viii, Sorab 251 and 253.

[54] *EI*, v, 3A, AD 1165.

[55] Hirahadgalli grant of Pallava Śivaskandavarman, *Select Inscriptions*, p. 461 ff.

[56] *EC*, xii, Kunigal I, AD 1157.

[57] *Mahāntara gelasargga*, EC, x, Srinivaspur 29, AD 920 and *Pancamaṭha sthāna gāvuṇḍagalum*, EC, xi, Koppa 1433, AD 1063.

[58] *EC*, viii, Sorab 309, AD 1213.

[59] Ibid, Sorab 84, AD 1283.

[60] Ibid. ix, Bangalore 85 C, AD 1110.

[61] Ibid. xiv (Mysore and Madhya Districts Supplement), Dynastic List of Inscriptions, p. 4; the inscription belongs to the reign of Ganga king Nītimārga of the Talkad line.

[62] *EC*, vii Sorab 80, AD 1181 refers to two gauḍa brothers paying a fine of 100 *gaḍyāṇas* to the district administration.

[63] Ibid. xiv, Dynastic List of Inscription, pp. 8-9.

[65] Ibid. viii, Sorab 132.

[65] *Memorial Stones*, ed, S. Setter and Gunther D. Sotheimer, Dharwar, 1982, p. 310 ff.

[66] *EC*, Channagiri 32, AD 1050.

[67] *Perumpāṇāttrupaḍai* 200-10 in J. V. Chelliah, *Pattuppāṭṭu*, Madras, 1962.

[68] *EC*, xi, Hiriyur 88, AD 870 refers to a group of peasant families which constructed a large tank in their village and provided it with four channels; also *EC*, v, Channarayapatna 251, AD 925.

[69] *Porunārttrupaḍai*, 290-99 in Chelliah, op. cit.

[70] The sluices and shutters are first mentioned in the *Paḍiṟṟupattu* which on the basis of its *Padigam* of Prologue can be assigned to the seventh century, see K. K. Pillay, A *Social History of the Tamils*, i, Madras, 1975, p. 196.

[71] *EI*, xxxiii, no. 53.

[72] *EC*, x, Goribidnur 47.

[73] Ibid xii, Nanjangud 269.

[74] *EC*, viii, Shikarpur 194.

[75] *EI*, v, no. 8, p. 52 Compare these instances with L. B. Alayev's view that the construction of an irrigation system usually was beyond a labour-resource of a single household and hence undertaken by a village or group of villages, L. B. Alayev in *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, ed, Tapan Raychoudhuri and Irfan Habib, Delhi, 1984 (reprint), p. 227. The view that irrigation was considered a work of religious merit with the result that during all the known history of southern India we notice inscriptions detailing construction of tanks, dams, etc. seems to overstate the importance of religion in traditional India and probably suggests that the irrigation works were undertaken more because of the desire for religious merit than for the fulfilment of material needs, L. B. Alayev, op. cit.

[76] *EC*, viii, Sorab 317, AD 1970.

[77] Ibid. x, Goribidnur 47, AD 762.

[78] *EC*, xii, Devangare 66, AD 694.

[79] Ibid. x, Sidlaghatta 32, AD 870.

[80] Ibid. x, Mulbagal 106, AD 950.

[81] *Supra*, Expansion of Fiefdom.

[82] The *araghaṭṭa* seems to have been introduced to agricultural technology about the fifth century though its use became widespread only during the early middle ages. For a useful discussion, see Lallanji Gopal, *Aspects of the History of Agriculture in Ancient India*, Varanasi, 1980, ch. 5. Chttopadhyaya's good study shows that in Rajasthan the adoption of *araghaṭṭa* device began in the seventh century and by the close of the twelfth century it became widespread in the area, B. D. Chattopadhyaya, "Irrigation in Early Medieval Rajasthan", *JESHO*, xvi, pts. 2-3, 293-316. Consequently Irfan Habib gives up his insistence on the equation of the *araghaṭṭa* with *noria* and the introduction of wheelpot device in India in the thirteenth century, Irfan Habib, *Presidential Address* (Section II: Medieval India), 32nd Indian History Congress, Varanasi, 1969, pp. 12-19 and "The Peasant in Indian History", *Presidential Address*, 43rd Indian History Congress, Kurukshetra, 1982, p. 80, fn. 2.

[83] The idea of a constant factor in technology (Burton Stein, op. cit., p. 24) has rightly been questioned by Irfan Habib, "The Peasant in Indian History", op. cit. p. 19. fn. 6.

[84] *Maduraikkāñci*, 80-90.

[85] Minakshi op cit, p. 104.

[86] The first Uttiramerur inscription which refers to *eri-vāriya* belongs to the reign of Dantivarmana (795-845), Minakshi, op. cit, p. 106.

[87] *EC*, X, Mulbagal, 255.

[88] *EC*, X, Hiriyur 33.

[89] *ARMAD*, 1984, no. 76, p. 236.

[90] C. Minakshi, op. cit., p. 102. The data might be of the second quarter of the eighth century depending on the identification of King

Parmeśvara Varmans one of whom ruled from 670 to 680 and the other from 720 to 731.

[91] *EC*, xii, Nanjangud 269.

[92] *ARMAD* 1632, no. 11, p. 167.

[93] *EC*, xii, Tiptur 106, AD 1437.

[94] Ibid. xi, Hiriyur 33,

[95] Ibid., xiv, (Mysore and Mandya Districts supplement), Dynastic List of Inscriptions, p. 4; x, Mulbagal 208, AD 1000; Ibid x, Chikballapur 13, AD 1027; *ARMAD*, 1934, no. 4, p. 167.

[96] Minakshi, op. cit., p. 107.

[97] Ibid, p. 106.

[98] K. A. N. Sastri, *Foreign Notices of South India*, Madras, 1939, p. 119.

[99] Om Prakash, *Food and Drinks in Ancient India*, Delhi, 1961, p. 11, fn. 5.

[100] *Caraka Saṃhitā* 27, 15-17; *Suśruta* 46, 21.

[101] *Vāyu P.*, VIII, 153-545.

[102] EC, x. Goribidnur 47, AD 762.

[103] N.N. Kher, *Agrarian and Fiscal Economy in the Mauryan and post Mauryan* Age, p. 382.

[104] *Aṣṭāṅga Saṅgraha*, VI, 14-16 cited in Om Prakash, op. cit., p. 170 fn.

[105] *Aṣṭāṇga Hridaya*, VI, 11-12 cited in ibid.

[106] *EC*, vi, Mudgere 36, AD 744.

[107] *Mānasollāsa*, III, 1373-74.

[108] *Indian Archaeology: A Reviev* 1976-77, p. 90 ff.

[109] *Perumpāṇāttrupaḍai*, 190-290 in J. V. Chelliah, op. cit.

[110] P. K. Gode, *Studies in Indian Culture*, i, Hoshiarpur, 1961, pp. 281-82. The table of references would show that of 15 literary notices to *jawar* between AD 100 and AD 1200 14 belong to the early middle ages (500-1200).

[111] *KI*, ii, no. 10, p. 33.

[112] Bridget and Raymond Allchin, *The Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan*, New Delhi, 1983, p. 292.

[113] B.G.L. Swamy, "Sources for a History of Plant Sciences in India", *Journal of the History of Science in India*, viii, nos. 1 & 2, 1973, 69.

[114] M.S. Randhawa, *A History of Agriculture in India*, New Delhi, 1980, p. 235.

[115] Note the insistence of Allchins on the absence in India of the wild relative of *ragi*, Bridget and Raymond Allchins, op. cit., p 279.

[116] *EC*, viii, Sorab 477, AD 991.

[117] *EI*, xxiv, no. 22.

[118] K.K. Pillay, op. cit. p. 32, fn. 16.

[119] *Paṭṭināpālai*, p. 10.

[120] *Perumpāṇāttrupāḍai*, 290-300.

[121] *Gāthāsaptasati*, 6.54 (*Jantia gulam*).

[122] *Dictionary of Economic Products of India*, vi (I), 247-56; betel-

leaf is said to be a native of Java.

[123] *Paṭṭinapālai*, 1-10.

[124] EC, xi, Gubbi 61.

[125] K. A N. Sastri, op. cit., p. 129.

[126] *EI*, vi, no. 35.

[127] Sastri, op cit., p. 136.

[128] *India Alberuni*, ed, Q. Ahmad, NBT, Delhi, 1983, p 237.

[129] *EC*, v, Arsikere 77, 78 etc.

[130] It has been argued that since all the South Indian and Ceylonese languages preserve the root *ten* (south) in their respective terms for coconut, the fruit must have migrated from the South Pacific islands, B. G. L. Swamy, "Sources for a History of Plant Sciences in India", op. cit., p 69.

[131] *EC*, viii, Sorab 389.

[132] Ibid. viii, Sorab 135.

[133] Al-Masudi, *Muruz-al-dhahab*, ed, de Meynard, Paris, 1861, ii, 438-39, cited in S. M. Ziauddin Alavi, *Arab Geography in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries*, Aligarh, 1965, p. 94.

[134] C H. Yule, ed, *The Book of Ser Marco Polo*, ii (London, 1875), p. 186.

[135] Ibid p. 379

[136] Ibid. p. 368 and note B on p. 370.

[137] Ibid. p. 363; Nicolo Conti, *India* pp. 1-39; and Vasco de Gama. *The Three Voyages*, p. 184, cited in A. Appadorai, *Economic Conditions of Southern India*, ii (Madras, 1936), 527-28.

[138] *EC*, vii, Shikarpur, 118.

[139] *EC*, v. no. 3.

[140] Attention has rightly been drawn to the plurality of peasant exploitation which in a social world dominated by overlapping claims and powers created latent interstices and discrepancies, see Perry Anderson, *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism* London, 1978, p. 149.

[141] *ARMAD*, 1936, no. 19, p. 84.

[142] *EC*, v. Hassan 122.

[143] *Catalogue of Inscriptions, Government of Andhra Pradesh Archaeological Series no.* 22 cited in K. Satyanarayana, *Studies in the History and the Culture of Andhra*, i, New Delhi, 1975, pp. 322-23.

[144] *EC*, v. Hassan 42

[145] *EC*, v. Hassan 34.

[146] *ARE*, 1908, pp. 70-71.

[147] K.A.N Sastri, *Cholovamśa* (in Hindi), Delhi, 1979, pp. 417-18.

[148] *EC*, viii, Sorab 317.

[149] Ibid. Sorab 314.

[150] *EC*, viii, Sorab 252 and 253.

[151] Ibid. Sorab 178.

[152] K. A. N Sastri, op cit., p. 415.

[153] In Tamil Nadu this seems to be characterized by the introduction of *maṇḍalam* and *valanāḍu* administrative units about the beginning of

the eleventh century and a reorganization of provinces on that basis. Y. Subbarayalu, "Maṇḍalam as Politico-Geographical Unit in South India", ***Proceedings of the Indian History Congress***, 39th Indian History Congress, Hyderabad, 1978, pp. 84-86.

[154] *EC*, viii, Sorab 468.

[155] *EC*, viii, Sorab 139.

[156] Ibid. Sorab 425, AD 1202.

[157] Irfan Habib, ***Presidential Address***, 43rd Indian History Congress, Kurukshetra, 1982, p. 45.

[158] No. 92 of 1916 cited in the ***JAHRS***, iv 82-83.

[159] No. 28 of 1926, cited in the ***JAHRS***, iv, 82-83.

[160] N. Karashima, ***South Indian History and Society***, Delhi, 1984, p. 530.

[161] The arguments are based on the evidence collected by Burton Stein (op. cit., pp. 235-39) though Stein himself would not view all this as anything new. Whether it be ***Valangai-Iḍangai*** unions or the peasant dominated Śaiva Siddhānta movement, he is inclined to explain these in terms of a changing social alliance and a harmonious and assimilative social evolution, ibid. p. 239.

[162] See R. N. Nandi, "Origin of the Vīraśaiva Movement", ***IHR***, ii, no. 1.

[163] At present the community is divided into three distinct groups, the *jangam* priestly order, the *pancamasāli*—trading communities and the non-*pancamasāli*—artisans and peasants, none of which intermarries with the others. There is a fourth group, comprising the shoe-makers, fishermen and a few untouchables, who can neither invest themselves with the sacred ***lingam*** nor can perform the eight sacraments (*aṣṭavrarana*) of a full Lingayat, see Edgar Thurston and K. V. Rangachari, ***Castes and Tribes of Southern India***, Madras,, 1907, see under ***Lingayat***.

11

NOBORU KARASHIMA
AND
Y. SUBBARAYALU

Valangai Idangai, Kāniyāḷar and Irājagarattār: Social Conflict in Tamil Nadu in the 15th Century

I

There are several inscriptions from Aduthurai and other places in Tiruchirapalli, South Arcot and Thanjavur districts in Tamil Nadu, which record the revolt of the *Valangai* and *Iḍangai* groups[1] against the brāhmaṇa and veḷḷāḷa landlords and also the government. Nilakanta Sastri, referring to the inscription at Aduthurai writes, "The ninety-eight sub-sects of the Iḍangai are again mentioned in a later inscription from Āḍuturai, which records the hardships to which these sub-sects were exposed at the hands of the vanniya tenants and the brāhmaṇa and veḷḷāḷa landlords, backed by government officials."[2] Vanamamalai, who recognized better the social implication of this record, emphasized its importance in terms of the anti-feudal

Reprinted from N. Karashima, ed, *Socio-Cultural Change in Villages in Tiruchirapalli District, Tamilnadu, India*, pt. 1, Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo, March 1983.

struggle of the time, and wrote, "An inscription found at Aduthurai reports the following: The Brahmins, with the help of the officers of the crown and the Vanniyas, wrought untold injustice on the people of 96 castes [sic] of the Idangai group (castes who were engaged in agriculture by contributing their labour). It also enumerated the taxes the local village Sabha proposed to levy on them with the consent of the representative of the king, Mooventhavelan. A mass meeting of 96 castes decided not to pay any tax levied by the Sabha and the king's officers. This reminds us of the no-tax campaign of recent memory. Such decisions of the Idangai castes are brought to light by many more inscriptions."[3]

However, the date of the Aduthurai inscription was not correctly assigned by either Nilakanta Sastri or the epigraphist, and Vanamamalai in turn took it for the Coḷa period. Though the dates of the other inscriptions which have almost the same or quite similar contents as that of the Aduthurai inscription and come from Kil-paluvur, Pennadam, Vriddhachalam and Korukkai were correctly assigned by the epigraphists as being of the 15th century, the identity of these inscriptions seems to have been overlooked by Nilakanta Sastri and others.

D.N. Jha, who made a survey of the past studies on Indian feudalism, again emphasized the importance of this Aduthurai inscription depending for his argument on the data given by Vanamamalai, and consequently repeated the mistake. He treated this struggle as having occurred in the 13th century and considered it as reflecting a crisis of feudalism.[4]

Recently Subbarayalu, one of the authors of the present paper, corrected this mistake by pointing out the identical contents of these inscriptions.[5] Since then, we have investigated almost all the inscriptions of the same period in the districts of Chingleput, North Arcot, South Arcot, Tiruchirapalli, Thanjavur and Pudukkottai and have discovered some more inscriptions which give us relevant information relating to this struggle.

In this paper, therefore, we shall examine all the inscriptions which relate to this conflict as described in the Aduthurai inscription and try to clarify its characteristics.

II

There are nine inscriptions including that of Aduthurai which are closely related to each other. Out of these, four inscriptions have the same date and almost the same contents.[6] Therefore, we shall first introduce here the contents of these inscriptions in detail. They are summarized in their own words as follows :

(1) "We, the people belonging to Valangai 98 and Iḍangai 98 of Vaḷudilampuṭṭu *uchāvaḍi*,[7] assembled in this temple in full strength and let the following be engraved on the wall of said temple."

2) "In this *maṇḍalam* (Vaḷudilampaṭṭu), even if the *uchāvaḍi pradāni* (the local Vijayanagar governor), Vanniyar (military people) and *jīvittakkāṛar* (holders of official tenure) coerce us, or the Brāhmaṇa and Veḷḷāḷa *kāṇiyāḷar* (holders of *kāṇi* right)[8] try to oppress us in collusion with the *irājagarattār* (government officers), we shall never submit to such oppression."

3) "If there appears any single person among us who helps the intruders, betrays us, violates the grant given by Chikkarasar,[9] or destroys the (current) measuring rod, we shall assemble as of today and enquire into it."

4) "Among those who were born in this *maṇḍalam*, no one should write accounts (for the government), let others write the accounts or collude with the government officers and *jīvitakkāṛars*. If there appears one such person, we shall degrade him in the caste hierarchy."

The following points are clear from the above: 1) The record is the resolution reflecting a bond of unity among the *Valangai* 98 and *Iḍangai* 98 groups[10] of the Vaḷudilampaṭṭu area. 2) They suffered together from the oppression of the local Vijayanagar governor, the military people and the holders of official tenure.

3) *Kāṇiyāḷar* among the brāhmaṇas and veḷḷāḷas also oppressed them with the help of the local governor and others. 4) They decided not to submit themselves to the oppression and resolved to defend the rights they had been enjoying. 5) Further some measure was contemplated to deal with the person who violated this resolution.

Examination of the remaining five inscriptions enables us to understand better the nature of the oppression or the troubles they suffered from.

An Elavanasur inscription,[11] which comes next in chronological sequence and belongs to the same locality as the four previous inscriptions, has a somewhat different character and gives some more information. It does not record the resolution of the *Valangai* and *Iḍangai* groups alone, but records the points for the tax payment decided by the people of the *maṇḍalam* including *Valangai* and *Iḍangai* groups, *sabhaiyār* and *tānattār*.[12] It may be taken as an agreement made between the *Valangai* and *Iḍangai* groups on one hand and the *sabhaiyār* and *tānattār* on the other, or as a joint resolution of these two parties.

It says that the people of the *maṇḍalam* suffered from troubles caused by the *irājagarattār* and *jīvitakkārar*, and that while paying tax to the government, they should pay as per the old custom, namely giving grain (paddy) for the imposition of grain, paying cash for the imposition of cash,[13] and paying for *kāṇikkai* one *paṇam* per *mā* of cultivated field. It is also stated that they need not pay such taxes as *nallerudu, narpasu, naṛkiḍā, joḍi, viniyogam, norelai-kāṇikkai* and *kudira-kānikkai*, and that no new item other than that stipulated in the inscriptions should be levied on the *tari* of the *kaikkoḷas*.

In this inscription it is the brāhmanas and Veḷḷāḷas who were forbidden to help or yield to the intruders. The other points are that nobody should take others' *kāṇi* land as *māniyam* (tax-free land) or take it as his *jīvitam* over and above his own *kāṇi* land, and that *jīvitakkāṛar* should not force the *ūravar*[16] to cultivate the land in the village except the land which the *ūravar* consented to cultivate.

It is clear from the above that the trouble was 1) the unjust tax collection by the government officers and official tenure holders, 2) the misappropriation of the *kāṇi* land by the above people and 3) the coercion given on the *ūravar* by the official tenure holders to cultivate the latters' land.

The remaining four inscriptions come from the inter-river region between the Kollidam and Kaveri rivers and seem to have almost the same contents, though some crucial passages are not ascertainable owing to the damage to some of those inscriptions. Three of those inscriptions belonging to Korukkai, Tiruvaigavur and Tiruvaiyaru respectively[17] record the resolution or agreement made by the three bodies of *sabhā*, *Valangai* and *Iḍangai*. In the Tiruvaigavur and Tiruvaiyaru inscriptions, the three bodies are stated to belong to Śrī-Parāntaka-nāḍu and Poykai-nāḍu ten-kāl respectively, but in the case of the Korukkai inscription it is not clear to which region (*nāḍu*) the three bodies belonged, the inscription being damaged.

The Korukkai inscription provides the following information : 1) as the people (*Valangai* and *Iḍangai* groups) of the *maṇḍalam* suffered so much, they had thought of running away; 2) but induced by some agreements that had been made in other places,[18] they realized that their weakness was a lack of unity, and therefore they assembled and 3) decided that in the region between the two rivers no land including *koyilparru* (temple lands), *aga·aparru* (brāhmaṇa's lands), *baṇḍāravāḍai* (government lands) and *jīvitaparru* (official tenure) should be treated as *aḍaippunibatti* (assignment?), *kuttagai*, (lease) or *servai* (that which is added?); and 4) for measuring land the 14 foot rod of the king should be used.

After stating these things in the beginning, it stipulates the rates and the way in which the taxes should be paid by cultivators and people of other professions in great detail.

From the Tiruvaigavur inscription, the following details are known: 1) they followed the precedent of Vaḷudilampaṭṭu *uchāvaḍi* in their way of paying taxes to the government; 2) since the commencement of the rule of the Kannaḍigas (Vijayanagar dynasty), their territory became the possession of the *jīvitakkārar* and many people coerced them by taxing unjustly, and leasing the land unjustly; and 3) it was resolved that in that *nāḍu* the land such as *iraiyilipparru* (tax-free land), *baṇḍāravāḍai* and *jīvitapparru* should not be given as *aḍaippu-nibatti*, *kuttagai* or *servai*. After the above statement, it further stipulates the rates and the way in which they should pay the taxes as in the previous inscription.

The Tiruppanandal inscription[19] is largely built over and only a portion which refers to the taxes on the wet crops is visible, and in the case of the Tiruvaiyaru inscription[20] only the initial part remains, from which we are able to know that the rod used for measuring the land on which *kāṇiyāḷar* raised crops was a rod of 18 feet and that on those lands such taxes as *kaḍamai*, *kāsu-kaḍamai* and *kāṇikkai* were levied.

It has become clear from the above that the matter recorded in these inscriptions concerns three categories of poeple, i.e., 1) the people of the *Valangai* and *Iḍangai* group who suffered from the oppression, 2) *kāṇiyāḷar* who were either brāhmaṇas or Veḷḷāḷas and who seem to have oppressed the first category of people with the help of the government officers, and 3) *irājagarattār* (government officers) and others who seem to have been the intruders and who oppressed the first and second categories of people by unjust taxation. We shall now examine in further detail these three categories of people.

What are the *Valangai* and *Iḍangai* groups? Though there has been much discussion in the past on the origin of these divisions and the *jātis* (caste) of which each group was composed, these points still remain obscure.[21] However, we need not go into those points in this paper, since the present problem does not concern their origin nor the group to which a particular *jāti* belonged.

The wide coverage of *jātis* by these two divisions is clear from previous studies made by many scholars. They comprised cultivators, artisans, merchants, etc. and it has been also clarified that the *jātis* comprised in these two groups usually belonged to the lower section of the caste hierarchy. Brāhmaṇas seem to have stood aloof from these divisions in most cases, though the position of Veḷḷāḷas seems to have been more vague.

It may be said from the inscriptions examined above that in the present case brāhmaṇas and Veḷḷāḷas were not included in these groups, since these inscriptions speak about the oppression of the people of the two groups by brāhmaṇa and Veḷḷāḷa *Kāṇiyāḷars*. However, there is some possibility of the lower section of the Veḷḷāḷa community being included among them. The names of *jātis* or professional groups known from the Korukkai and Tiruvaigavur inscriptions as probably being included in *Valangai* and *Iḍangai* groups are as follows :

Seṭṭigaḷ (merchants)
Kaikkolar (weavers)
Seṇaikkaḍaiyār (merchants)
Sāligar (weavers)
Niyāyattār (weavers)
Seṇiya (weavers)

Maṇṛāḍi/Iḍaituṛai (herders)
Koyilaṅgāḍigaḷ (merchants)
Sivaṇpaḍavar (merchants)
Vāṇiyar (merchants)
Sekku-Vāṇiyar (oil merchants)
Kammāḷar :
    Kollaṇ (blacksmiths)
    Taccaṇ (carpenters)
    Taṭṭāṇ (goldsmiths)
Vaṇṇattār (Kannakkan?)
Kusavaṇ (potters)
Nāvitaṇ (barbers)
Vaṇṇāṇ (washermen)
Kāvalkāraṇ (watchmen)
Kaivviṇai-paṛaiyar (craftsmen paṛaiyas)
Sār akkāra (soldiers)
Iḷampuñjai (toddy tappers)

These two inscriptions do not specifically mention that the *jātis* listed above belong either to *Valangai* or *Iḍangai*. Moreover they mention *nāṭṭar* and *tandaimār* also. In fact these inscriptions purport to give the rates of tax assessment to be paid to the government by all the communities. It is natural therefore that the *nāṭṭār* who were the *kāṇiyāḷar* and the *tandarimār* who were the military community are also included. These were however the target of attack *Valangai* by the and *Iḍangai*. Therefore we have excluded them from the list. The remaining *jātis* are classified broadly into two groups. 1. *Kuḍigaḷ* or cultivators, and 2. *paṛṛaḍi* or *paṭṭaḍai* meaning industrialists or craftsmen. The *jātis* of the first group are not specified. In the second group which are listed above are found various categories of weavers, merchants and craftsmen. It is interesting to note the inclusion therein of a group of Paṛaiya who are called "craftsmen paṛaiya" and the exclusion of the "cultivating Paṛaiya". Among the merchants *sekku-vāṇīyar* or oil merchants seem to have been comparatively more prosperous as they paid a high rate of assessment.

From the above list, therefore, we may be able to say that *Valangai* and *Iḍangai* groups are the people mostly belonging to the lower section of the caste hierarchy except Sakku-Vāṇiyar and can be defined socio-economically as the direct producers of agricultural and other products and the people who provided services to others.

What is *kāṇiyāḷar*? The term *kāṇiyāḷar* can be taken as meaning the holder of *kāṇiyāṭchi* (*kāṇi*). The meaning of *kāṇiyaṭchi* is "hereditary right" and this term can be employed to indicate not only the right to land but also to many other things including offices such as accountantship, headmanship, etc. In the present case, it is certain that it concerns land. However, it is not easy to ascertain further as to what sort of right of land it meant. It can be defined only from the context in which the term was used. In many Vijayanagar inscriptions which record the sale of *kāṇi* right, it can be interpreted as the right to the possession of land and the enjoyment of its produce. When it was applied to the right to cultivation of land, the term *uḷavu*, meaning cultivation, was usually prefixed to it, i.e. *uḷavu-kāṇiyāṭchi*.[22] The use of the term *kāṇi* or the term *kāṇiyāḷar* became more frequent only from the later stage of the Coḷa rule.

Considering these points, we may be able to interpret *kāṇiyāḷar* of these inscriptions as the landholders who controlled the land they possessed. Many brāhmaṇas who were granted *kāṇiyāṭchi* by the Coḷa kings became *kāṇiyāḷar*, and many of the influential Veḷḷāḷas also became *kāṇiyāḷar* either by grants or by purchase of the *kāṇiyāṭchi* in and after the later stage of the Coḷa rule.[23]

The last category of people comprised *irājagarattār*, *Vanniyar* and *jīviṭakkāṛar*. As to the first one, the three inscriptions from Aduthurai, Kil-paluvur and Pennadam specify it as *uchāvaḍi pradāni* (Vijayanagar governor of the *uchāvaḍi*), though the two inscriptions of Vriddhachalam and Elavanasur simply employ the term *irājagarattār*. Though the other inscriptions do not refer directly to these people, they also mention the heavy taxation imposed by the government and one of them refers to the trouble caused by the rule of the Kannaḍigas. Therefore, we may be able to conclude that they were the intruders who governed the territory or those who worked for them as their followers.

Vanniyar today is a caste found in Chingleput, North Arcot, and Tiruchirapalli districts, but in those days this term seems to have meant generally the people who were in military service. *Vanniyar* in these inscriptions, therefore, must have been the military people who intruded into the country accompanying the Kannaḍa officers and also the traditional military community (called *ṭandarimār*) in the locality.

The term *jīvitakkāṛar* means the holders of land given by some authority for his/her sustenance. Therefore, even a dancing girl in a temple who was given land for her living can properly be called as *jīvitakkāṛar*. Howerver, judging from the fact that we often come across in the inscriptions of those days in these localities the high ranking officers who held *jīvitam*, i.e., *jīvitakkāṛar*, and also from the statement mentioned above that they oppressed the people, we should take it as standing for high ranking officers or some influential personages.

Now we shall consider the course of this struggle by focussing our attention on the dates and localities of those nine inscriptions.

As already seen, the four inscriptions have almost the same date and almost identical contents, They were the resolution or the bond of unity by the *Valangai* and *Iḍangai* groups of Vaḷudilampaṭṭu. In that sense, it was an open revolt of the lower peasants and artisans as described earlier by Subbarayalu.[24]

The Elavanasur inscription, which dates to one month later, belongs to the same region (Vaḷudilampaṭṭu) and tells us for the first time of the involvement of *sabhaiyār* (brāhmaṇas), which shows us the two aspects of the matter. One aspect concerns the relation between the *Valangai/Iḍangai* groups as the lower section of the society and the brāhmaṇa *kāṇiyāḷars* as the landlords who controlled them, and shows the regulation of this relation. The other concerns the relation between the *Valangai/Iḍangai* groups and the brāhmaṇa *kāṇiyāḷars* on one hand and the intruding rulers and their allies such as *irājagarattār*, *Vanniyar* and *jīvitakkāṛar* on the other. According to these inscriptions the *kāṇiyāḷars* were also oppressed by the intruding rulers and this aspect explains the joint effort by the *Valangai/Iḍangai* groups and the *kāṇiyāḷars* to defend themselves against the oppression by the intruding rulers.

The other four inscriptions which date still later than the Elavanasur inscription by six or seven months concern the region between the Kollidam and Kaveri rivers. All of them seem to show the same characteristics as the Elavanasur inscription in the sense that they record the joint resolution of both the *Valangai/Iḍangai* groups and the brāhmaṇa/*kāṇiyāḷars*, though *tānattārs* were not included. However, there is found in them, as already shown, some other information also. They stipulate the way in which the people of the territory should pay taxes to the government in greater detail and they refer to the resolution made earlier in Vaḷudilampaṭṭu *uchāvaḍi*. These two points show us the fact that the revolt which took place first in Vaḷudilampaṭṭu *uchāvaḍi* developed into a wider movement aiming at some tangible goal involving the people of the higher section of the society also, and spread quickly to the adjacent areas.

Did this open revolt, which soon after became a wider movement, occur all of a sudden without any antecedents? We have several inscriptions which are close to the above nine inscriptions in date and space and which give us relevant information on this question.

An inscription, which comes from Tevur in Thanjavur district and is dated January 1426,[25] records the order of Periya Sirupparasar given to the *nāṭṭavar*[26] of Tiruvarur *uchāvaḍi*, which included the people of the villages of *agaraparru* (brāhmaṇas),. . .*traiyili* (tax free), *baṇḍāravāḍai* (government), *amaram* (military) and *likitajīvitam* (accountants?). Though it is incomplete and the meaning of some portions is not clear, it gives us information on the trouble from which the people of the *nāḍu* suffered greatly. It is the *adikārigaḷ* (officers) who harassed the people by imposing the poll tax *mallāyi-avvaiyār-magamai* on them and it seems that they farmed out (*kuttagai*) the region for the collection of this tax. It is stated that this farming out increased the quantum of the tax by competitive bidding and that the amount was hiked from 200 to 2000 *paṇam* in a year's time.

From the last portion of this incomplete inscription, we can infer that the amount of *valangai iḍangai vari* (another way of expressing *mallāyi-avvaiyār-magamai* in the text meaning tax on the people of the *Valangai* and *Iḍangai* groups) was settled with the help of Chikkadevar in order to save the people from the trouble, which gives us a link between this inscription and the nine inscriptions examined earlier. Chikkadevar mentioned in this inscription might have been the same as Chikkarasar whose grant is referred to as the document not to be violated in the first four inscriptions.[24] Anyway, this inscription gives us a clear picture of the tyranny of the *adikāris* who troubled the people of the region on the southern bank of the Kaveri river. The objective of this inscription seems to record the measure taken by the higher authorities of the government to save the people (the lower sections in caste hierarchy?) from this tyrannical oppression of the *adikāris*. It was two years prior to the revolt of the *Valangai* groups in the region on the northern bank of the Kaveri river.

A short inscription which comes from Kugaiyur in South Arcot district and is dated 1414[28] records the order given by Nārayya Nāyaka to the *nāṭṭavar* of Magadai *maṇḍalam*[29] that the *kāṇikkai* which had been newly imposed in the previous year should be abolished forever. Though neither the *Valangai* nor *Iḍangai* group appears in it, this inscription may be considered to have the common politico-economic implication with the Tevur inscription examined above.

There are six other inscriptions which also give us relevant information.[30] These are located in various places in Chingleput, North Arcot, South Arcot and Tiruchirapalli districts and are dated 1427 and 1428, which dates fall between that of the Tevur inscription and the nine inscriptions examined earlier. Out of these six, the four belonging to Chingleput and North Arcot districts refer to the conditions in the same locality, i.e., Chandagiri *rājyam* (*uchāvaḍi*), and have almost identical contents.

They record the royal order accompanied by the orders and communication of the executive officers, given to the temple authorities (*sthānattār* or *tānattār*) of the Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava and other temples of the region. Their contents may be summarized as follows: *Kuḍigaḷ* (cultivators, artisans and other people who were in the lower section of the agrarian society) of the temple lands were distressed greatly, because *adikāris* imposed many taxes on temple lands, such as *joḍi*, *mugampārvai*, *aṅgasālai-joḍi*, *viśeṣādāyam*,[31] etc. and also because *jīvitakkārar*, *aḍikārigaḷ*, *ūravar* and *tānattār* took the temple land as *kuttagai*. Owing to this suffering of the *kuḍigaḷ*, the temples became unable to conduct customary worship (*pūjas*), festivals and repairs, and accordingly the *panmāheśvaras* (Śaiva devotees) and an individual (Vairavanayinār) went and appealed to the king about the difficulty they had. Hence the royal order to the effect that 1) except the *vipūdikāṇikkai*[32] payable to the royal treasury from the temple, all the other taxes which the *adikāris* had imposed and taken should be remitted to the temple treasury; 2) the income misappropriated by the *jīvitakkāṛar*, *adikārigaḷ*, *ūravar* and *tānattār* (through *kuttagai*) should be given back to the temple treasury; 3) *panmāheśvaras* and *vairavanayinār* should superintend the above and let the worship, festivals and repairs of the temple be conducted; and 4) no temple land should be given to anybody as *kuttagai*.

The remaining two inscriptions are the one from Chidambaram temple (South Arcot district) and the other from Jambukeshvaram temple (Tiruchirapalli district). Both record the royal order to the temple authorities of the Śaiva, vaiṣṇava and other temples in the three *rājyams* (*uchāvaḍ*) of Tiruchirāpaḷḷi, Coḷamaṇḍalam[23] and Vaḷudilampaṭṭu, though in the case of the former only Tiruchirāpaḷḷi and Vaḷudilampaṭṭu *rājyams* are readable due to the damage to the inscription. Their contents do not differ much from those of the above four inscriptions.

However, some new information is also obtained: (1) *Ūravar* took the temple land as *otti*[34] and gave trouble to *kuḍigaḷ* without returning the land, (2) *kuḍigaḷ* ran away in many temple villages because of the trouble given by the *adikāris*, (3) it is Marudavana Śivan who appealed to the king with the *panmāhēśvaras* and (4) temple land should not be given as donation or *bhaṭṭavṛtti* (land for the maintenance of the *bhaṭṭa* or learned brāhmaṇa).

The special character of these six inscriptions is that they concern only temple lands in contrast to the nine inscriptions examined earlier and the Tevur inscription, all of which seem to have concerned all the categories of land in the region, and that the people who took measures to relieve themselves from the troubles are not the cultivators nor artisans, but the *panmāheśvarar* and certain individuals who were responsible to or deeply concerned with the proper worship to be conducted in the temples.

Even then, from these six inscriptions we are able to know about distressed position of the cultivators, artisans and others, which resulted from the misbehaviour of the *jīvitakkāṟar adikāri, ūravar* and *tānattār*; and the heavy tax burden inflicted on temple land by *aḍikāris*. Therefore, we may be able to say that these inscriptions also are products of the same politico-economic condition which prevailed in the former *Coḷa* country in 1420's.

Here we have to examine the meaning of the term *Kuttapai* (or *kuttogai*) appearing in the Tevur inscription, most of the six inscriptions in 1427 and 1428 and two of the nine inscriptions in 1429, and also some other related terms appearing in the last two inscriptions. Etymologically *kuttagai* may be explained as rent, lease, etc. The actual meaning of this term in Tevur inscriptions is clear and it conveys the tax farming of the territory (*uchāvaḍi*). The usage of this term in the six earlier inscriptions is not so clear as in the Tevur inscription, but it seems to mean the fixed rent for the village or land leased out by the temples. In the Korukkai and Tiruvaigavur inscriptions it appears with some other terms in the following manner. In the former, the land (or village) belonging to the categories of *koyi'paṟṟu* (temple land), *agarappaṟṟu* (brāhmaṇa's land), *bandāravāḍai* (government land) and *jīvitappaṟṟu* (official tenure) is not allowed to be taken up as *adaippu-nibatti, kuttagai* and *servai*. In the latter, the categories of land stipulated similarly are *iṟaiyiliparṟu* (tax free land), *bandāravāḍai* and *jīvitappaṟṟu*. *Adaippu-nibatti* may mean "assignment" and *servai* seems to mean "that which is added to something else."

In this connection, reference should be made to another inscription of Elavanasur dated 1 04.[35] Though it is damaged, it seems to record that a high ranking officer (probably *mahā-pradāni*) ordered that the seven *paṟṟus* (revenue units) which had been given to some personage as *servai* (?) tenure should be reconverted into *chandāyittam* tenure as the *kuḍigaḷ* had run away owing to the heavy tax (?) burden. As the term *chandāyittam* (a variant of *sañjāyam*) means "management of land by proprietor," the meaning of *servai* may be taken as "lease." Therefore, though the meaning of those two terms appearing with *kuttagai* in these two inscriptions is not so clear, they seem to convey a similar idea to that of *kuttagaī*; therefore all these three terms including *kuttagai* would have meant the leasing or assignment of land or village for some fixed price. In that sense, the *kuttagai* and other means mentioned in these inscriptions must have functioned as a mechanism, through which the government officers and other influential personages exploited the cultivators, artisans and others of the lower section of the society and the *kāṇiyāḷars* of the upper section as well.[36]

III

Now we shall consider the matter as a whole putting together all the information obtained above and new information from some other inscriptions.

First, we may view the origin and the spread of this struggle. So far as the information gathered from the inscriptions is concerned, we have two inscriptions of the early date, i.e., one from Elavanasur (1404) and the other from Kugaiyur (1414), which record the trouble people faced because of heavy taxation. However, the importance of the Tevur inscription is greater than these two, when we consider that the course of the struggle culminated in open revolt in 1429, its date being closer and also since it relates to the *Valangai* and *Iḍangai* groups. The objective of this inscription seems to record, as already shown, the assurance given to the people of the *rājyam* by the government authority that the government officers (*adhikāris*) would not oppress the people. In the succeeding years in 1427 and 1428, the people of the religious order in various places complained to the king about the misbehaviour of the government officers and their followers and the inability of the temple to conduct proper religious duties owing to the running away of the cultivators, artisans and others. These complaints concerned a large territory covering the present districts of Chingleput, North Arcot, South Arcot and Tiruchirapalli. Responding to these complaints the king took measures to prevent the government officers and others from giving trouble to the cultivators, artisans and employees of the temple villages.

Being encouraged by this success, the cultivators, artisans and others who organized themselves into the *Valangai* and Iḍaṅgai groups arose in an open revolt in the Vaḷudilampaṭṭu area which comprised parts of the present South Arcot and Tiruchirapalli districts. Within a year, this revolt spread to the adjacent areas between the Kollidam and Kaveri rivers and developed into a movement aimed at a tangible goal, namely, the settlement of taxes in their favour and also involving the people of the upper section of society.

The above is an outline of the struggle known to us from the inscriptions. Though we have no information as to what happened in other regions, so far as these two regions, i.e., Vaḷudilampaṭṭu and the region between the two rivers are concerned, it seems that the revolt was a success.

However, we have several inscriptions which give us information on the conditions of all the concerned regions for a later period. An inscription in Tiruvennainallur in South Arcot district, dated 1446,[37] i.e., 17 years after the open revolt, records the king's order given to the local chiefs, accountants and others (?) in Vaḷudilamaṭṭu *uchāvaḍi*. It states that the *kuḍigaḷ* who belonged to *Valangai* and *Iḍangai* groups should be exempted from payment of *kāṇikkai* (*iṇavari* and *iḍaṅgaivari*) which the *pradānis* (local Vijayanagar governor) had demanded. It states that because of this demand of *kāṇikkai*, *kuḍigaḷ* ran away to outside regions (*puṛa rājyam*) and that accordingly the worship in the temples was suspended and the people suffered much. It further states that though the king had ordered a remission of the tax and had asked an officer to put proclamatory inscriptions in all places to this effect, the officer implemented the order only partially and hence a new order to another officer was necessary.

Another inscription in Srirangam temple in Tiruchirapalli district, dated 1464,[38] namely 35 years after the revolt, records the order issued by Sāḷuva Tirumaladeva Mahārāya, probably a *mahāmaṇḍalēśvara*, to the Srirangam temple and other concerned bodies that the income which had been paid to the government as revenue from the villages granted to the Srirangam temple should be remitted for the benefit of the temple and the villages which had been taken by the government officers and others as *kuttagai* should be returned and put under the supervision of the temple. The locality in which the granted villages existed covered the *uchāvaḍis* of Tiruchirapalli and Tiruvarur and the *sīrmai* of Tañjāvūr.

In Kugaiyur in South Arcot district we have three inscriptions which record the orders of *nāyakas* to the *nāṭṭavars* of

Magadai *maṇḍalam* for the years 1447, 1464 and 1482 respectively.[40] The first one records the remission of the taxes unduly taken from the people of the *maṇḍalam*, the second the change of the measuring rod from 18 feet to 20 feet in favour of the *kuḍis*, and the last the lightening of the burden of taxes and forced labour. Though in these inscriptions neither *Valangai*/*Iḍangai* groups nor the term *kuttagai* appears, they refer to the distressed conditions of the people (*kuḍi*) due to unjust and heavy taxation. We have two similar inscriptions in Aragalur[41] in Salem district also. The two inscriptions of Aragalur of the same period as those above in Kugaiyur record the *nāyaka's* order to the *nāṭṭavar* of Magadai *maṇḍalam* to the effect of reducing the tax burden of the people of the *maṇḍalam*. They speak also of the unjust and heavy taxation from which *kuḍis* suffered.

All these inscriptions tell us that the trouble described in the Aduthurai inscription and others continued in the same locality even after the struggle of the people to improve the conditions in the latter half of the 1420's. Notwithstanding the open revolt and its subsequent development into a wider movement, the distressed conditions of the people of the lower section of society do not seem to have improved.

Lastly, we shall consider the meaning of this social conflict in the wider context of the socio-economic conditions prevailing in the 15th century in the former Cōḷa country.

As seen already, we can distinguish three categories among the people who were concerned with these struggles. One is the people who organized themselves as the *Valangai* and *Iḍangai* groups comprising cultivators, artisans, servicing castes, merchants and others, and who suffered from the oppression of the people of the upper section and the government officers. Another is the brāhmaṇa and Veḷḷāḷa landlords who were called *kāṇiyāḷar* in the inscriptions and who oppressed the lower people but were in turn oppressed by the government officers. The last is the government officers and other privileged people most of whom seem to have been the intruders into these regions from Karnataka. They oppressed the people under their rule.

The first thing which we can suggest from the foregoing examination is the existence of a significant socio-economic confrontation between the direct producers represented by the

Valangai/Iḍangai groups and the landlords represented by the brāhmaṇa and Veḷḷāḷa *kāṇiyāḷar*, since the latter were blamed by the former for their suffering. Although we are not so sure about the prevalence of landlords in all the regions mentioned above, their prevalence in the lower Kaveri valley i.e., the areas covered by Tiruchirapalli and Tiruvarur *uchāvaḍis*, and the Chingleput/ North Arcot region, towards the close of the Coḷa rule was suggested by Karashima, one of the authors of the present paper, in his recent works.[42] As we shall see later, an expansion of the agrarian economy seems to have taken place to a large extent in the Vaḷudilampaṭṭu area in the 13th and 14th centuries, which must have resulted in the emergence of landlords in this region also. Moreover, the mention in the inscriptions in Vaḷudilampaṭṭu of oppression by the landlords attests in itself to their prevalence in this region.

However, one thing we have to pay due attention to in relation to the appearing of *kāṇiyāḷars* is the problem of *nāṭṭavars*. Regrettably, we have very little knowledge on the *nāṭṭavars*. Subbarayalu once suggested that the *nāṭṭārs* (same as *nāṭṭavars*) of Coḷa times would have been veḷḷāḷa landholders, and this interpretation may be applicable to the Vijayanagar *nāṭṭavars* also to a certain extent. However, in Vijayanagar times they seem to have included brāhmaṇa and other communities also, since we have evidence suggesting this. The Tevur inscription speaks of the *nāṭṭavar* of the *nāḍu* which included *brahmadeya* tenure also along with some other tenures, and we have a Pāṇḍyan inscription in Ratnagiri[43] in Tiruchirapalli district mentioning *Urāḷi-nāṭṭavar*, which means the *nāṭṭavar* of the Urāḷi community. It seems, therefore, that *nāṭṭavar* of this age had a multi-community composition.

Considering all these points, we may suggest tentatively that the *nāṭṭavars* of these inscriptions would have been the influential *kāṇiyāḷar*, many of whom were Veḷḷāḷas and brāhmaṇas. Since the intermediary character of the *nāṭṭavars* between the *kuḍigaḷ* below and the *irājagarattār* above can be well perceived from the contents of the inscriptions of Tevur, Kugaiyur and Aragalur, the study of the *nāṭṭavars* would be an urgent necessity for our better understanding of the state structure of the Vijayanagar empire.[44]

The second thing is the tyrannical rule of the government officers such as *pradānis*, *adikāris*, etc. and we may say that this must have been the decisive factor which forced the *Valangai* and *Iḍangai* groups to rise in an open revolt against the landlords and the government as well. It would seem from the inscriptions that these government officers were intruders from Karnataka, and their tyranny may reflect the political confusion at the start of the Vijayanagar rule in Tamil Nadu.

Lastly, we have to consider the question of economic growth and the subsequent social change seen in the Vaḷṭṭudilampattu area in the 13th and 14th centuries. The fact that in many of the temples in Vaḷudilampaṭṭu the number of Vijayanagar inscriptions is greater than that of Coḷa inscriptions in contrast to the opposite tendency seen in the temples of the lower Kaveri valley may be explained in relation to this economic and social change, and if we examine the tax terms appearing in the Vijayanagar inscriptions in those areas, we obtain a clearer picture on this point.[45] The frequency of terms related to industries such as *sekku-āyam* (tax on oil pressing), *taṛi-kaḍamai* (tax on looms), etc. and the general term *paṭṭaḍai-nūlāyam* or simply *nūlāyam* related to craftsmen (including weaving) and merchants, is considerably higher in the Valudilampattu area than in Tiruchirapalli and Tiruvarur areas from the 14th century. As a result of this economic development and social change in the Valudilampattu area, the people who organised themselves as *Valangai* and *Iḍangai* groups must have increased their power during that period.

These three factors discussed above, i.e., the political confusion after the Vijayanagar occupation, the prevalence of landlords who controlled the cultivators and artisans, and the expansion of agrarian economy in the Vaḷudilampaṭṭu area encouraging an increase in the power of the artisans, together, must have caused the revolt of the people of the lower section in society who suffered most from the oppression.

Though it seems that the distressed condition of the people did not improve as a result of this revolt and its subsequent development into a wider movement, nevertheless we do not hear of any more incidents of this type after the record in the Kugaiyur inscriptions in 1482. The subsiding of the movement seems to have coincided with the establishment of the *nāyaka* rule in these regions. Though many *nāyakas* appear in the inscriptions of the 14th and 15th centuries, we have a greater number of inscriptions which record the activities of *nāyakas* such as tax remission on his own accord and arbitration in some social conflict for the 16th century. Therefore, *nāyakas* seem to have acquired the necessary legitimacy for remitting important taxes such as *kaḍamai joḍi*, etc. by the beginning of the 16th century.

Broadly speaking, we may consider the three centuries after the decline of the Coḷa central power, i.e., from the 13th to 15th centuries, as the transitional period, in which some new social formation was generated accompanying the socio-economic changes in those regions and being accompanied in turn by many conflicts and confrontations between the different sections of society. The establishment of the *nāyaka's* rule in Tamilnadu in the 16th century seems to have meant the consolidation of a new social formation in the region and the termination of the transitional period. To clarify the nature of this new social formation, however, we have to make further detailed studies for the period from the 13th to 16th centuries.

NOTES AND REEERENCES

[1] *Valangai* means "right hand" and *Iḍangai* means "left hand". The dual division of society into *Valangai* and *Iḍangai* in south India is noticed from about 1100 A.D. onwards in inscriptions of the Coḷa and Vijayanagar periods and in British records later. The current understanding of this division among most scholars is that the *jātis* or castes based on agriculture were grouped under *Valangai* and the non-agricultural castes, say artisans and traders, under *Iḍangai*. See for the various opinions on this subject, Burton Stein, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1980, pp. 172-215 and 469-88; Also Arjun Appadurai, "Right and Left Hand Castes in South Indla," *IESHR*, xi, nos. 2 & 3, 1974, 316-260.

[2] K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Colas*, Madras, 1955, p. 552. It is strange that Nilakanta Sastri mentions only the *Iḍangai* group, though *Valangai* group also appears in the Aduthurai inscription as we shall see subsequently.

[3] N. Vanamamalai, "Consolidation of Feudalism and Antifeudal Struggles during Chola Imperialist Rule", *Proceedings of the Second International Conference Seminar of Tamil Studies*, iii, Madras, 1970, 242-43. Vanamamalai not only repeated the mistake made by Nilakanta Sastri by mentioning only *Iḍangai* group but also made an additional one by taking the number of castes as "96".

[4] "Early Indian Feudalism: A Historiographical Critique", Indian History Congress, XL session, Waltair, 1979. Presidential address for section I Ancient India.

[5] "The Peasantry of Tiruchirapalli District from the 13th to 17th centuries", *SSCC*, no. 1.

[6] *ARE*, 1913, no. 34 (Aduthurai); *ARE*, 1926, no. 253 (Kilpaluvur); *ARE*, 1918, no. 92 (Vriddhachalam); *ARE*, 1928-29, no. 246 (Pennadam).

[7] *Uchāvaḍi* or *chāvaḍi* was the administrative province of the Vijayanagar empire. It was also known as *rājya*. Each of these provinces was named after the respective headquarters. Vaḷudilampaṭṭu-*chāvaḍi* comprised approximately the area bounded by the basin of the Pennar river on the north and the Kollidam (Coleroon) river on the south.

[8] *Kāṇi* means hereditary right. Further details on *Kaṇiyāḷar* are given later.

[9] The meaning of the grant given by Chikkarasar is not clear. But it may relate to the guarantee given by Chikkadeva and mentioned in the Tevur inscription, which we shall examine later.

[10] The number "98" is supposed to denote the number of *jātis* included in each of the two groups. But the number seems to be fictitious, for even in the elaborate lists of the British period the 98 castes are not mentioned. See Barton Stein, op. cit., p. 472.

[11] *ARE*, 1937-38, no. 49.

[12] *Sabhaiyār*: corporate body of brāhmaṇa villages; brāhmaṇa land holders. *Tānattār* or *sthānattār:* managing body of temples. The *tānattār* appears only in this inscription. It may indicate that in this particular locality (i.e. the 12 *paṟṟu* around Paruvur in Iruṅgoḷappāḍi-nāḍu) there were many *devadāna* or temple villages inhabited by *Valangai* and Iḍaṅgai people.

[13] This point may be understood in its proper perspective if we remember that inscriptions of the Vijayanagar period distinguish two categories of *kuḍi* on the basis of the mode of payment of the assessment, viz., *Kuḍiyānapēr* (peasants) and *kāsāya-kuḍi* (merchants and craftsman). The *kāsāya-kuḍi,* also referred to as *paṭṭadai,* obviously paid the assessment in money (*kāsāyam* "tax in money"). This is also clear from the Korukkai and Tiruvaigavur inscriptions to be discussed below.

[14] *Nallerudu* (good bull), *naṟpasu* (good cow) and *naṟkiḍā* (good ram) seem to be levies on cattle and sheep. *Jōḍi* (quit rent) may be a nominal rent paid for enjoying some tax free land. *Viniyogam* (expenses) may be tax paid for meeting public expenses. The meaning of *norelai-kāṇikkai* is not clear. *Kāṇikkai* is "present". So *Kudirai-kāṇikkai* may be a present made for the maintenance of horses of the officials. For these tax terms, see the forthcoming article on Vijayanagar revenue terms by N. Karashima, Y. Subbarayalu and P. Shammugam.

[15] *Kaikkoḷars* were weavers who were usually associated with temples at this time,

[16] *Ūravar* usually means members of the corporate body, *ūr*.

[17] *ARE*, 1977, no. 216 (Korukkai)
ARE, 1914, no. 59 (Tiruvaigavur)
SII, v. no. 554 (Tiruvaiyaru)

[18] Since the inscription is badly damaged at this portion the names of those places are not ascertainable. But in almost identical context the Tiruvaigavur inscription refers to "many *nāḍus* in Vaḷudilampaṭṭu chavaḍi." Obviously therefore, it refers to the incidents recorded in the previous five inscriptions discussed above.

[19] *ARE*, 1931-32, no. 78.

[20] *SII*, v, no. 554.

[21] See works mentioned in fn. 1 above.

[22] N. Karashima, "Nāyakas as Lease-holders of Temple lands", *JESHO*, xix, pt 2, 227-32.

[23] We have much evidence on the emergence of non-brāhmaṇa *kāṇiyāḷars* in the lower Kaveri valley and also in the Chingleput/North Arcot region. See the papers by N. Karashima: "The Prevalence of Private Landowning in the Lower Kavery Valley in the Late Coḷa period and its Historical Implications", *SSCC*, no. 1, (Tokyo, 1980) 1-20; "The New Agrarian Order Appearing in the Lower Kaveri Valley towards the close of the Cola rule", *Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference-Seminar of Tamil Studies*, v ii, Madras, 1981, 7-14; "Land Transfer as seen in Later Coḷa inscriptions of Vedaranyam", N. Jagadeesan and S. Jeyapragasam, ed, *Homage to a Historian: A Festschrift*, Madurai, 1976, pp. 167-73; "Brahmadeya Ukkal: Its Declining Phase in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth centuries", *Perspectives in Indian Archaeology, Art and Culture* (forthcoming).

[24] See fn. 5 above.

[25] *SII*, xvii, no. 562.

[26] *Nāṭṭavar* are usually considered to be members of the corporate body *nāḍu*. The problem relating to this term will be discussed later.

[27] See fn. 9 above.

[28] *ARE*, 1918, no. 109.

[29] Magadai-maṇḍalam comprised Attur Taluk of Salem district and the neighbouring Kallakkurichi and Tirukkoyilur taluks of South Arcot district.

[30] *SII*, xvii, no. 736 (Tirumallaivayil, Chingleput district)
ARE, 1912, no. 226. (Tiruvorriyur, Chingleput district)
ARE, 1929-30, no. 152 (Tiruppasur, Chingleput district)
ARE, 1921, no. 270 (Takkolam, North Arcot district)
ARE, 1913, no. 376 (Chidambaram, South Arcot district)
ARE, 1936-37, no. 113 (Jambukesvaram, Tiruchirapalli district)

[31] *Mugampārvai*, fee for getting the audience of the officials. *Aṅgasālai-jōḍi*, fee on granaries. *Viśeṣādāyam*, levy on some special income.

[32] *Vipūdikāṇikkai*, may mean "presents on account of prosperity." *Vipūdi* < *vibhūt:* (plenty).

[33] The *rājyam* or *chāvaḍi* of Tiruchirapalli comprised the area on both banks of the river Kaveri in the Tiruchirapalli district. Coḷam-

aṇḍalam, otherwise called Tiruvarur chavaḍi, had its headquarters at Tiruvarur and comprised most of the Thanjavur delta south of the river Kollidom.

[34] *Otti* usually means mortgage, sometimes also lease.

[35] *ARE*, 1937-38, no. 491.

[36] A similar phenomenon seems to have occurred in other place also. See the work cited in fn. 22 above.

[37] *ARE*, 1921, no. 476.

[38] *SII*, iv, no 506.

[39] *Sīrmai* is a general term denoting territory in Vijayanagar times. Only in the 6th century Thanjavur became a separate *chāvaḍi*.

[40] *ARE*, 1918, nos. 96, 97, 103.

[41] *ARE*, 1913, nos. 422 & 423.

[42] See works cited in fn. 23 above.

[43] *ARE* 1914, no. 173.

[44] Though Burton Stein (op. cit.) has discussed the problem of *nāṭṭavar* many things are yet to be clarified about this.

[45] See the forthcoming paper referred to in fn. 14 above.

INSCRIPTIONS RELATING TO THE CONFLICT

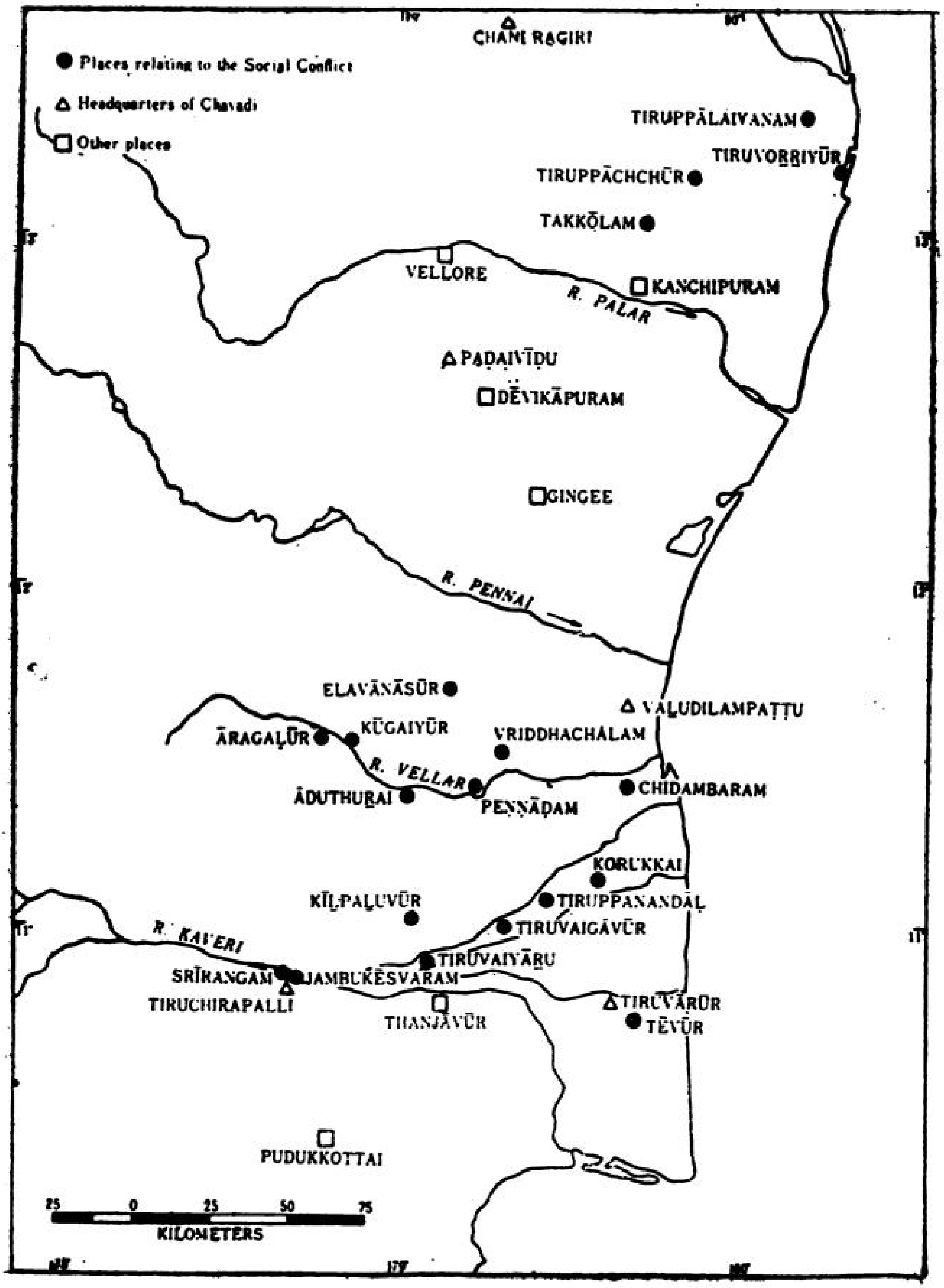
	Village	*District*	*Date*	*Reference*
1.	Elavanasur	SA	1404	*ARE*, 1937-38, no. 491.
2.	Kugaiyur	SA	1414	Ibid. 1918, no. 109
3.	Tevur	Tj	1426, Jan. 10	*SII*, xvii, no. 562
4.	Takkolam	NA	1427, Dec.	*ARE*, 1921, no. 270
5.	Tirumullaivayil	Cg	1427/28 (?)	*SII*, xvii, no. 736
6.	Tirruvorriyur	Cg	1427/28	*ARE*, 1912, no. 226
7.	Tiruppasur	Cg	1428, Jan. 25	Ibid. 1929-30, no. 152
8.	Chidambaram	SA	1428, Mar. 25	Ibid. 1913, no. 376
9.	Jambukesvaram	Tp	1428, Mar. (?)	Ibid. 1936-37, no. 113
10.	Aduthurai	Tp	1429, Apr. 11	Ibid. 1913, no. 34
11.	Kilpaluvur	Tp	1429, Mar. 27-Apr. 26	Ibid. 1926, no. 253
12.	Vriddhachalam	SA	1429, Apr. 24	Ibid. 1918, no. 92
13.	Pennadam	SA	1429, Apr. 11	Ibid. 1928-29, no. 246
14.	Elavanasur	SA	1429, May 4	Ibid 1937-38, no. 49
15.	Korukkai	Tj	1429, Nov. 12	Ibid. 1917, no. 216
16.	Tiruvaigavur	Tj	1429, Nov. 21	Ibid. 1914, no. 59
17.	Tiruppanandal	Tj	1429, No. (?)	Ibid. 1931-32, no. 78
18.	Tiruvaiyaru	Tj	1429, Dec. 12	*SII*, v, no. 554
19.	Tiruvennainallur	SA	1446, Sep. 30	*ARE*, 1921, no. 476
20.	Kugaiyur	SA	1447	*ARE*, 1918, no. 97
21.	Kugaiyur	SA	1464	Ibid. 1918, no. 96
22.	Srirangam	Tp	1464	*SII*, iv, no. 506

23. Aragalur	Sl	1464 (?)	*ARE*, 1913, no. 423
24. Aragalur	Sl	1482	Ibid. 1913, no. 422
25. Kugaiyur	SA	1482	Ibid. 1918, no. 103

Abbreviations of district names:

Cg: Chingleput	NA: North Arcot
SA: South Arcot	Sl: Salem
Tj: Thanjavur	Tp: Tiruchirapalli

MAP SHOWING PLACES OF SOCIAL CONFLICT


● Places relating to the Social Conflict
△ Headquarters of Chavadi
□ Other places
CHANDRAGIRI
TIRUPPĀLAIVANAM
TIRUVORRIYŪR
TIRUPPĀCHCHŪR
TAKKŌLAM
VELLORE
KANCHIPURAM
R. PALAR
PAḌAIVĪḌU
DĒVIKĀPURAM
GINGEE
R. PENNAI
ELAVĀNĀSŪR
VAḶUDILAMPAṬṬU
ĀRAGAḶŪR
KŪGAIYŪR
VRIDDHACHALAM
R. VELLAR
ĀDUTHURAI
PEṆṆĀḌAM
CHIDAMBARAM
KORUKKAI
KĪḶPALUVŪR
TIRUPPANANDĀḶ
TIRUVAIGĀVŪR
TIRUVAIYĀRU
R. KAVERI
SRĪRANGAM
JAMBUKĒSVARAM
TIRUCHIRAPALLI
THANJĀVŪR
TIRUVĀRŪR
TĒVŪR
PUDUKKOTTAI
25 0 25 50 75
KILOMETERS

Part Three

FEUDAL IDEOLOGY

12

D.D. KOSAMBI

Social and Economic Aspects of the Bhagavad-Gītā

The *Bhagavad-Gītā*, "Song of the Blessed One", forms part of the great Indian epic *Mahābhārata*.[1] Its 18 *adhyāya* chapters contain the report by Sañjaya of a dialogue between the Pāṇḍava hero Arjuna and his Yadu Charioteer Kṛṣṇa, the eighth incarnation of Viṣṇu. The actual fighting is about to begin when Arjuna feels revulsion at the leading part which he must play in the impending slaughter of cousins and kinsmen. The exhortations of Lord Kṛṣṇa answer every doubt through a complete philosophical cycle, till Arjuna is ready to bend his whole mind, no longer divided against itself, to the great killing. The *Gītā* has attracted minds of bents entirely different from each other and from that of Arjuna. Each has interpreted the supposedly divine words so differently from all the others that the original seems far more suited to raise doubts and to split a personality than to heal an inner division. Any moral philosophy which managed to receive so many variant interpretations from minds developed in widely different types of society must be highly equivocal. No question remains of its basic validity if the meaning be so flexible. Yet the book has had its uses.

If a *Mahābhārata* war had actually been fought on the scale

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reported, nearly five million fighting men killed each other in an 18-day battle between Delhi and Thanesar; about 130,000 chariots (with their horses), an equal number of elephants and thrice that many riding horses were deployed. This means at least as many camp-followers and attendants as fighters. A host of this size could not be supplied without a total population of 200 millions, which India did not attain till the British period, and could not have reached without plentiful and cheap iron and steel for ploughshares and farmers' tools. Iron was certainly not available in any quantity to Indian peasants before the 6th century *BC*. The greatest army camp credibly reported was of 400,000 men under Candragupta Maurya, who commanded the surplus of the newly developed Gangetic basin. The terms *patti*, *gulma*, etc. given as tactical units in the *Mahābhārata* did not acquire that meaning till after the Mauryans. The heroes fought with bows and arrows from their chariots, as if the numerous cavalry did not exist; but cavalry—which appeared comparatively late in ancient Indian warfare—made the fighting chariots obsolete as was proved by Alexander in the Punjab.

The epic began, like the early Homeric chants, as a series of lays sung at the court of the conquerors. The lament was thinly veiled, presumably by irony; the defeated Kurus survived in legend (*e.g.* the *Kuru-dhamma-jātaka*) as unsurpassable in rectitude and nobility of character. Kṛṣṇa-Nārāyaṇa had no role to play even in the first connected epic narrative. Should the reader doubt all this, let him read the final cantos of the extant *Mahābhārata*. The Pāṇḍavas come in the end to disgraceful old age, and unattended death in the wilderness. Their opponents are admitted to heaven as of right, but the heroes are only transferred there from the tortures of hell, after a long and stubborn effort by the eldest brother Yudhiṣṭhira. It strikes even the most casual eye that this is still the older heaven of Indra and Yama; Kṛṣṇa-Nārāyaṇa is not its dominant figure, but a palpable and trifling insertion in a corner.

Those legendary Utopians, the pure and unconquerable Uttara-Kurus of the *Dīgha-Nikāya* (32) and the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* (814; 8.23) are not to be confused with the Kurus who survived in historical times near Delhi-Meerut. The Buddha preached several of his sermons at the settlement Kammāsadamma in Kuruland (*Majjhima Nikāya*, 10;75;106) while their capital seems to have been at Thulla-koṭṭhita (*Majjhima Nikāya*, 82), the seat of the nameless petty tribal Kuru chief, presumably descended from the Pāṇḍava conquerors whom the epic was to inflate beyond all limits. This negligible 'kingdom' either faded away or was among the tribal groups systematically destroyed by the Magadhan emperor Mahāpadma Nanda, a few years before Alexander's raid into the Punjab. The memory, however, remains—as of a tribe, but not a full-fledged kingdom with a class structure—in the eleventh book of the *Arthaśāstra*, along with similar oligarchies like the Licchavis and the Mallas known to have been destroyed about 475 *B.C.* As for Nārāyaṇa, it might be noted here that the famous benedictory initial stanza *Nārāyaṇam namaskṛtya*, which would make the whole of extant *Mahābhārata* into a Vaiṣṇava document, was stripped off by V.S. Sukṭhankar's text-criticism in 1933 as a late forgery.

For What Class?

We know that the *Gītā* exercised a profound influence upon Mahatma Gandhi, B.G. Tilak, the 13th century Maharaśhtrian reformer Jñāneśvara, the earlier Vaiṣṇava *ācārya* Rāmānuja, and the still earlier Śaṅkara.[2] Though both fought hard in the cause of India's liberation from British rule, Tilak and the Mahatma certainly did not draw concordant guidance for action from the *Gītā*. Aurobindo Ghose renounced the struggle for India's freedom to concentrate upon study of the *Gītā*. Lokamanya Tilak knew the *Jñāneśvarī* comment, but his *Gītā-rahasya* is far from being based upon the earlier work. Jñāneśvara himself did not paraphrase Śaṅkara on the *Gītā*, nor does his very free interpretation follow Rāmānuja; tradition ascribes to him membership of the rather fantastic *nātha* sect. Rāmānuja's Vaiṣṇavism laid a secure foundation for the acrid controversy with the earlier followers of Śiva who came into prominence with the great Śaṅkara. But then, why did Śaṅkara also turn to the *Bhagavad-gītā*?

What common need did these outstanding thinkers have that was at the same time not felt by ordinary people, even of their own class? They all belonged to the leisure-class of what, for lack of a better term, may be called Hindus. The consequent bias must not be ignored, for the great comparable poet-teachers from the common people did very well without the *Gītā*. Kabīr, the Banaras weaver, had both Muslim and Hindu followers for his plain yet profound teaching. Tukārāma knew the *Gītā* through the *Jñāneśvarī*, but worshipped Viṣṇu in his own way by meditation upon God and contemporary society in the ancient caves (Buddhist and natural) near the junction of the Indrāyaṇī and Paūnā rivers. Neither Jayadeva's *Gītāgovinda*, so musical and supremely beautiful a literary effort, (charged with the love and mystery of Kṛṣṇa's cult) nor the Viṣṇuite reforms of Caitanya that swept the peasantry of Bengal off its feet were founded on the rock of the *Gītā*. I have yet to hear that the heterogeneous collection which forms the Sikh canon owes anything substantial directly to the *Gītā* though it preserves verses due to Jayadeva, and the Maharashtrian Nāmdeva Jñāneśvara ran foul of current brāhmaṇa belief at Alandi, and had to take refuge about 1290 *A.D.* on the south bank of the Godavari, in the domains of Rāmacandra Yādava, to compose his famous gloss in the common people's language.

We know as little of the historic action taken or instigated by Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja as we should have known of Tilak's had only his *Gītā-rahasya* survived. Yet, about the year 800, Śaṅkara was active in some manner that resulted—according to tradition—in the abolition of many Buddhist monasteries. That this was achieved by his penetrating logic and sheer ability in disputation is now the general Hindu belief. The mass of writing left in his name, and what is given therein as the Buddhist doctrine which he refutes, make only one thing clear: that he had not the remotest idea of Gotama Buddha's original teaching. Buddhism as practised in the monasteries had in any case degenerated into Lamaism with opulent *vihāra* foundations which were a serious drain upon the economy of the country. That Śaṅkara's activity provided a stimulus to their abolition, and Rāmānuja's some handle against the wealthier barons whose worship of Śiva was associated in the popular mind with their oppressive land rent, seems a reasonable conclusion on the evidence before us. Otherwise, it would be difficult to explain why the richer, aristocratic landholders opted for Śiva, the poorer, and relatively plebeian overwhelmingly for Viṣṇu, in the bitter *smārta-vaiṣṇava* feuds. It is difficult to believe that they could come to blows because of differing religious philosophy.

Śaṅkara managed to discover a higher and lower knowledge in the Upaniṣads which allowed him "to conform to the whole apparatus of Hindu belief"—whatever that may mean—"on the lower plane, while on the higher he finds no true reality in anything; his logic, it has been well said, starts by denying the truth of the proposition 'A is either B or not B'. . .At death the soul when released is merged in the absolute and does not continue to be distinct from it". According to Rāmānuja, "if in a sense there is an absolute whence all is derived, the individual souls and matter still have a reality of their own, and the end of life is not merger in the absolute but continued blissful existence. This state is to be won by *bhakti*, faith in and devotion to God." It is not possible to imagine that subtle arguments on these tenuous ideas gripped the masses, that people could be whipped up to a frenzy merely by the concept of restricted dualism (*viśiṣṭādvaita*) or thoroughgoing dualism (*dvaita*). Yet frenzied conflict there was, for centuries. Neither side objected to rendering faithful service at the same time to beef-eating Muslim overlords, who knocked brāhmaṇas off without compunction or retribution, and desecrated temples without divine punishment.

The main conclusion is surely the following: Practically anything can be read into the *Gītā* by a determined person, without denying the validity of a class system. The *Gītā* furnished the one scriptural source which could be used without violence to accepted brāhmaṇa methodology, to draw inspiration and justification for social actions in some way disagreeable to a branch of the ruling class upon whose mercy the brāhmaṇas depended at the moment. That the action was not mere personal opportunism is obvious in each of the cases cited above. It remains to show how the document achieved this unique position.

A Remarkable Interpolation

That the song divine is sung for the upper classes by brāmaṇas, and only through them for others, is clear. We hear from the mouth of Kṛṣṇa himself (*G.* 9.32): "For those who take refuge in Me, be they even of the sinful breeds such as women, vaiśyas, and śūdras. . ." That is, all women and all men of the working and producing classes are defiled by their very birth, though they may in after-life be freed by their faith in the god who degrades them so casually in this one. Not only that, the god himself had created such differences (*G.* 4.13): "The four-caste (class) division has been created by Me"; this is proclaimed in the list of great achievements.

The doctrines are certainly not timeless.[3] Ethics come into being only as they serve some social need. Food-producing society (as distinct from conflicting aggregates of food-gathering tribal groups) originated in the fairly recent and definite historical past, so that the principles upon which it may work at some given stage could not have been expressed from eternity. The *Gītā* sets out each preceding doctrine in a masterly and sympathetic way without naming or dissecting it, and with consummate skill passes smoothly on to another when Arjuna asks "why then do you ask me to do something so repulsive and clearly against this?" Thus, we have a brilliant (if plagiarist) review-synthesis of many schools of thought which were in many respects mutually incompatible. The incompatibility is never brought out; all views are simply facets of the one divine mind. The best in each system is derived, naturally, as from the high God. There is none of the polemic so characteristic of disputatious Indian philosophy; only the Vedic ritual beloved of the Mīmāmsakas is condemned outright. The Upaniṣads are well—if anonymously—represented, though the *Śvetāśvatara Upainṣad* alone contains the germ of *bhakti*, and none the theory of perfection through a large succession of rebirths. This function of *karma* is characteristically Buddhist. Without Buddhism, *G.* 2.55-72 (recited daily as prayers at Mahatma Gandhi's āśrama) would be impossible. The *brahma-nirvāṇa of* *G.* 2.72, and 5.25 is the Buddhist ideal state of escape from the effect of *karma*. We may similarly trace other—unlabelled—schools of thought such as Sāṃkhya and Mīmāṃsā down to early Vedānta (*G.* 15.15 supported by the reference to the *Brahma-sūtra* in *G.* 13.4). This helps date the work as somewhere between 150-350 *A.D.*, nearer the later than the earlier date. The ideas are older, not original, except perhaps the novel use of *bhakti*. The language is high classical Sanskrit such as could not have been written much before the Guptas, though the metre still shows the occasional irregularity (*G.* 8.10^4, $8.\ 11^5$, 15.

3^a &c) in *triṣṭubhs*, characteristic of the *Mahābhārata* as a whole. The Sanskrit of the high Gupta period, shortly after the time of the *Gītā*, would have been more careful in versification.

It is known in any case that the *Mahābhārata* and the Purāṇas suffered a major revision[3] in the period given above. The *Mahābhārata* in particular was in the hands of brāhmaṇas belonging to the Bhṛgu clan, who inflated it to about its present bulk (though the process of inflation continued afterwards), before the Gupta age came to flower. The Purāṇas also continued to be written or rewritten to assimilate some particular cult to Brāhmaṇism. The last discernible redaction of the main Purāṇa group refers to the Guptas still as local princes between Fyzabad and Prayag.[4] This context fits the *Gītā* quite well. The earliest dated mention of anything that could possibly represent the *Gītā* is by Hsiuen Chuāng,[5] early in the seventh century, who refers to a brāhmaṇa having forged at his king's order such a text, (supposedly of antiquity) which was then 'discovered', in order to foment war. The fact does remain that the *Mahābhārata* existed in two versions at the time of the *Āśvalāyana Gṛhya Sūtra*, which refers both to the *Bhārata* and the *Mahābhārata*.[6] The prologue of the present *Mahābhārata* repeats much the same information in such a way as to make it evident that the older 24,000-*śloka Bhārata* was still current at the time the longer version was promulgated. Every attempt was made to ascribe both to the great 'expander', Vyāsa, to whom almost every Purāṇa is also ascribed. A common factor is the number *18*, which had some particular sanctity for the whole complex, and for the brāhmaṇas connected therewith. There are *18* main *gotra* clan-groups of brāhmaṇas[7] though the main ṛṣī sages are only seven in number; many of the *18* (e.g. the *kevala* Bhārgavas and *kevala* Āṅgirasas) are difficult to fit into a rational scheme. Correspondingly, there are *18* main Purāṇas; and *18 parvan* sections of the *Mahābhārata*, though the previous division was into *100*, as we learn from the prologue. The very action of the Bhāratan war was fought over *18* days between *18* legions. The *Gītā* has also *18 adhyāyas*, which is surely not without significance. That the older *Bhārata* epic had a shorter but similar *Gītā* is most unlikely. One could expect some sort of an exhortation to war, as is actually contained in *G*. 2.37: "If slain, you gain heaven; if victorious, the earth; so up, son of Kunti, and concentrate on fighting". These lines fit the occasion very well. Such pre-battle urging was customary in all lands at all times (advocated even by the supremely practical *Arthaśāstra*, 10.3) through invocations and incantations, songs of bards, proclamations by heralds, and speech of captain or king. What is highly improbable—except to the brāhmaṇa bent upon getting his *niti* revisions into a popular lay of war—is this most intricate three-hour discourse on moral philosophy, after the battle-conches had blared out in mutual defiance and two vast armies had begun their inexorable movement towards collision.

To put it bluntly, the utility of the *Gītā* derives from its peculiar fundamental defect, namely dexterity in seeming to reconcile the irreconcilable. The high god repeatedly emphasizes the great virtue of non-killing (*ahimsā*), yet the entire discourse is an incentive to war. So. *G.* 2.19 ff. says that it is impossible to kill or be killed. The soul merely puts off an old body as a man his old clothes, in exchange for new; it cannot be cut by weapons, nor suffer from fire, water or the storm. In *G.* 11, the terrified Arjuna sees all the warriors of both sides rush into a gigantic Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa's innumerable voracious mouths, to be swallowed up or crushed. The moral is pointed by the demoniac god himself (*G.* 11.33) : that all the warriors on the field had really been destroyed by him; Arjuna's killing them would be a purely formal affair whereby he could win the opulent kingdom. Again, though the *yajña* sacrifice is played down or derided, it is admitted in *G.* 3.14 to be the generator of rain, without which food and life would be impossible. This slippery opportunism characterizes the whole book. Naturally, it is not surprising to find so many *Gītā* lovers imbued therewith. Once it is admitted that material reality is gross illusion, the rest follows quite simply; the world of "doublethink" is the only one that matters.

The *Gītā* was obviously a new composition, not the expansion of some proportionately shorter religious instruction in the old version. I next propose to show that the effort did not take hold for some centuries after the composition.

Not sufficient unto the purpose

The lower classes were necessary as an audience, and the heroic lays of ancient war drew them to the recitation. This made the epic a most convenient vehicle for any doctrine which the brāhmaṇas wanted to insert; even better than rewriting the Purāṇas, or faking new Purāṇas for age-old cults. The Sanskrit language was convenient, if kept simple, because the Prakrits were breaking apart into far too many regional languages; Sanskrit was also the language which the upper classes had begun to utilize more and more. Kuṣāṇa and Sātavāhana inscriptions are in the popular *lingua franca* used by monk and trader. But from 150 *A.D.*, there appears a new type of chief (oftener than not of foreign origin like Rudradāman) who brags[8] in ornate Sanskrit of his achievements, including knowledge of Sanskrit. The Buddhists had begun to ignore the Teacher's injunction to use the common people's languages; they too adopted Sanskrit The high period of classical Sanskrit literature really begins with their religious passion—plays and poems, such as those written by Aśvaghoṣa.[9] A patrician class favouring Sanskrit as well as the Sanskrit-knowing priestly class was in existence.

No one could object to the interpolation[10] of a story (*ākhyāna*) or episode. After all, the *Mahābhārata* purports to be the recitation in the Naimiṣa forest to the assembled sages and ascetics by a bard Ugraśravas, who repeated what Vyāsa had sung to Janamejaya as having been reported by Sañjaya to Dhṛtarāṣṭra ! The brāhmaṇas were dissatisfied with the profit derived from the *Gītā*, not with its authenticity. So, we have the *Anu-gītā*[11] as a prominent sequel in the 14th canto (*Aśvamedha-parvan*). Arjuna confesses that he has forgotten all the fine things told before the battle, and prays for another lesson. Kṛṣṇa replies that it would be impossible even for him to dredge it out of his memory once again; the great effort was not to be duplicated. However, an incredibly shoddy second *Gītā* is offered instead which simply extols brāhmaṇism and the brāhmaṇa. Clearly, that was felt necessary at the time by the inflators though no one reads it now, and it cannot be compared to the first *Gītā* even for a moment.

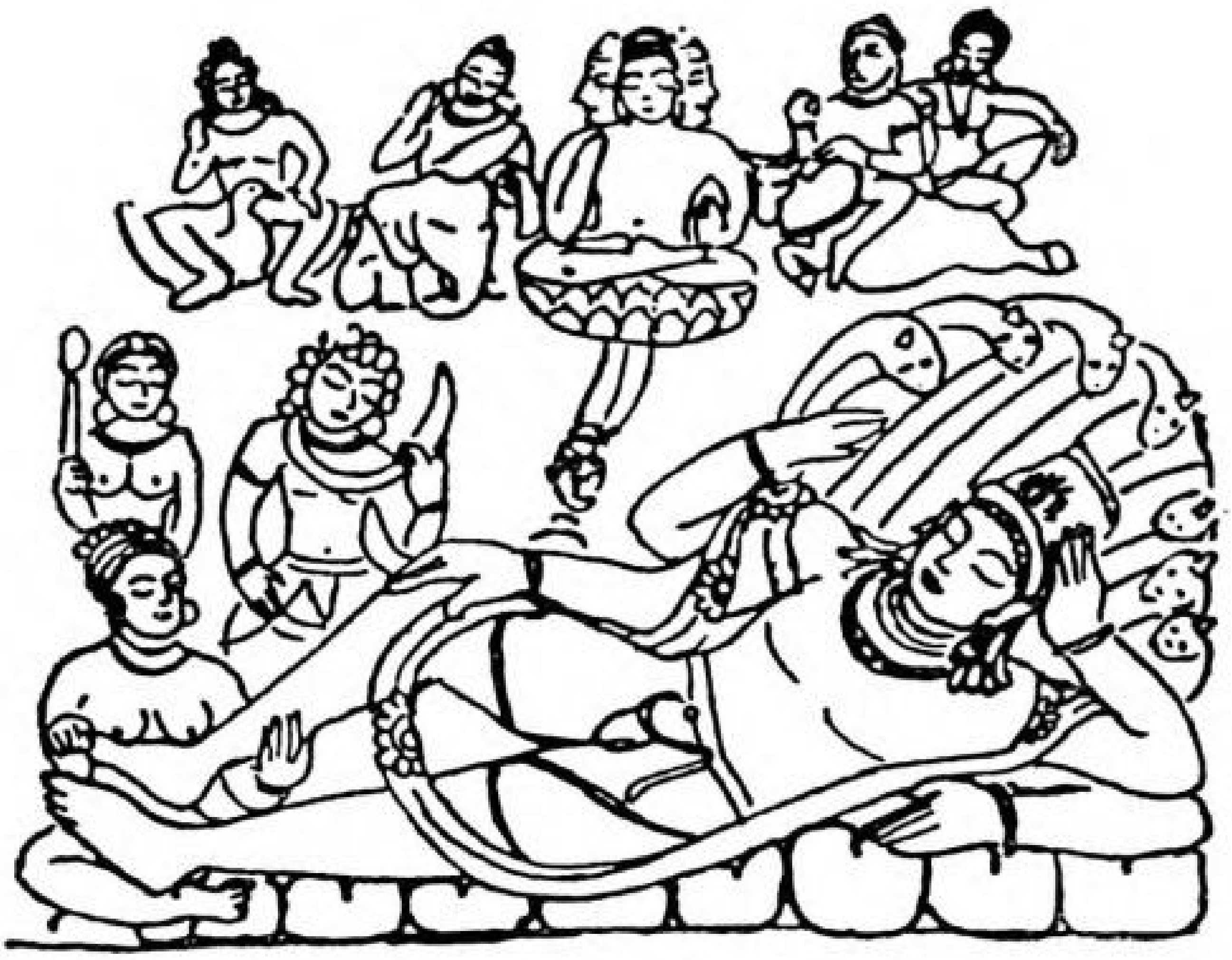
Secondly, the *Gītā* as it stands could not possibly help any kṣatriya in an imminent struggle, if indeed he could take his mind off the battle long enough to understand even a fraction thereof. The ostensible moral is : "Kill your brother, if duty calls, without passion; as long as you have faith in Me, all sins are forgiven." Now the history of India always shows not only brothers but even father and son fighting to the death over the throne, without the slightest hesitation or need for divine guidance. Indra took his own father by the foot and smashed him (*RV*, 4.18.12), a feat which the brāhmaṇa Vāmadeva applauds. Ajātaśatru, king of Magadha, imprisoned his father Bimbisāra to usurp the throne, and then had the old man killed in prison. Yet, even the Buddhists[14] and Jains as well as *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (2.1) praise the son (who was the founder of India's first great empire) as a wise and able king. The *Arthaśāstra* (1.17-8) devotes a chapter to precautions against such ambitious heirs-apparent; and shows in the next how the heir-apparent could circumvent them if he were in a hurry to wear the crown. Kṛṣṇa himself at Kurukṣetra had simply to point to the Yādava contingent, his own people, who were fighting in the opposite ranks. The legend tells us that all the Yādavas ultimately perished fighting among themselves. Earlier, Kṛṣṇa had killed his maternal uncle Kaṃsa. The tale gains a new and peculiar force if it be remembered that under mother-right, the new chief must always be the sister's son of the old.

Thirdly, Kṛṣṇa as he appears in the *Mahābhārata* is singularly ill-suited to propound any really moral doctrine. The most venerable character of the epic, Bhīṣma, takes up the greatest of *Mahābhārata* parvans (*Śānti*) with preaching morality on three important questions : King-craft (*rāja-dharma*), conduct in distress (*āpad-dharma*), and emancipation (*mokṣa dharma*). As regent, he had administered the kingdom to which he had freely surrendered his own right. He had shown irresistible prowess and incomparable knightly honour throughout a long life of unquestioned integrity. The sole reproach anyone can make is that he uses far too many words for a man shot full of arrows, dying like a hedgehog on a support of its own quills. Still, Bhīṣma seems eminently fitted to teach rectitude. But Kṛṣṇa? At every single crisis of the war, his advice wins the day by the crookedest of means which could never have occurred to the others. To kill Bhīṣma, Śikhaṇḍin was used as a living shield against whom that perfect knight would not raise a weapon, because of doubtful sex. Droṇa was polished off while stunned by the deliberate false report of his son's death. Karṇa was shot down against all rules of chivalry when dismounted and unarmed; Duryodhana was bludgeoned to death after a foul mace blow that shattered his thigh. This is by no means the complete list of iniquities. When taxed with these transgressions, Kṛṣṇa replies bluntly at the end of the *Śalya-parvan* that the man could not have been killed in any other way, that victory could never have been won otherwise. The calculated treachery of the *Arthaśāstra* saturates the actions of this divine exponent of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. It is perhaps in the same spirit that leading modern exponents of the *Gītā* and of *ahiṃsā* like Rajaji have declared openly that non-violence is all very well as a method of gaining power, but to be scrapped when power has been captured : "When in the driver's seat, one must use the whip."[13]

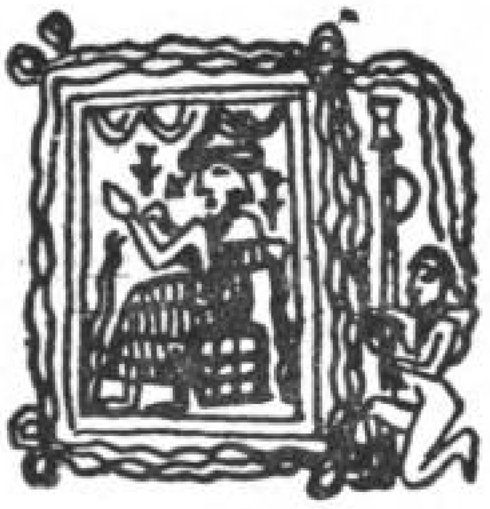
Why Kṛṣṇa?

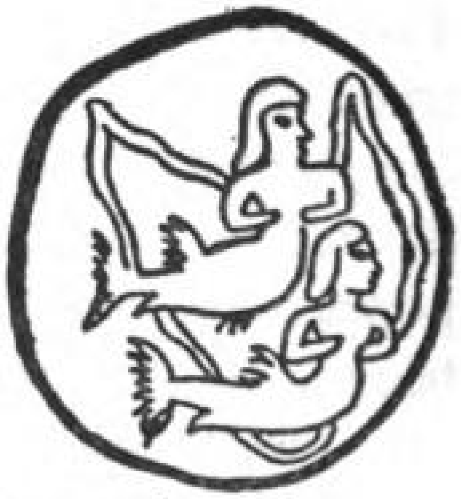
Just as the *Mahābhārata* could be used as a basis only because people came to hear the war-story recited, Kṛṣṇa could have been of importance only if his cult were rising in popularity, yet sufficiently unformed for such barefaced remoulding. The cult, however, is clearly synthetic. The identification with Nārāyaṇa is a syncretism, taking originally distinct cults as one. In the same direction is the assimilation of many sagas to a single Kṛṣṇa legend, whether or not the original hero bore the epithet of Kṛṣṇa. There would, however, be no question of creating a new cult out of whole cloth; some worship or set of similar worships must already have been in existence among the common people before any brāhmaṇa could be attracted thereto. The best such recent example is that of Satya-nārāyaṇa, 'the true Nārāyaṇa' popular all over the country, but which has no foundation whatever in scripture, and which is not even mentioned 200 years ago. Indeed, the origin seems to be in the popular legends of one Satya Pīr,[14] in Bengal; the Pīr himself became Satyanārāyaṇa.

The Vedas have a Viṣṇu, but no Nārāyaṇa. The etymology seems to be 'he who sleeps upon the flowing waters (*nārā*), and this is taken as the steady state (fig. 1) of Nārāyaṇa.[15] It precisely describes the Mesopotamian Ea or Enki, who sleeps in his chamber in the midst of the waters, as Sumerian myth and many a Sumerian seal (fig. 2) tell us. The word *nārā* (plural) for 'the waters' is not Indo-Aryan. Both the word and the god might conceivably go back to the Indus Valley. The later appearance in Sanskrit only means that the peaceful assimilation



.1 Nārayaṇa asleep on the waters.

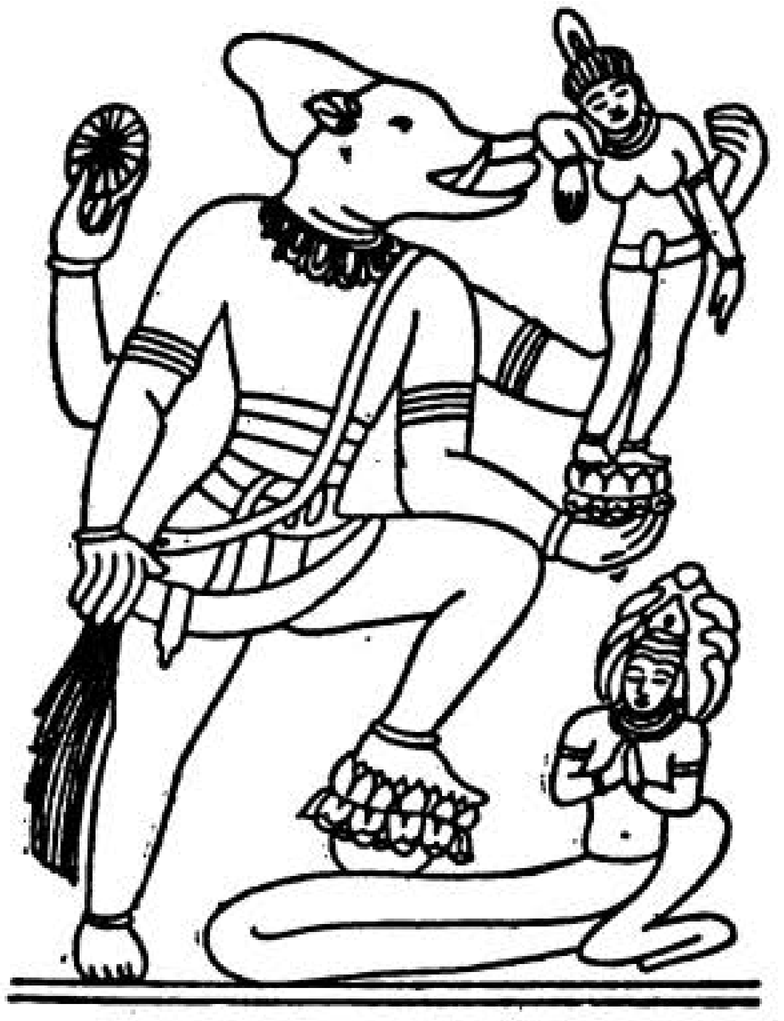




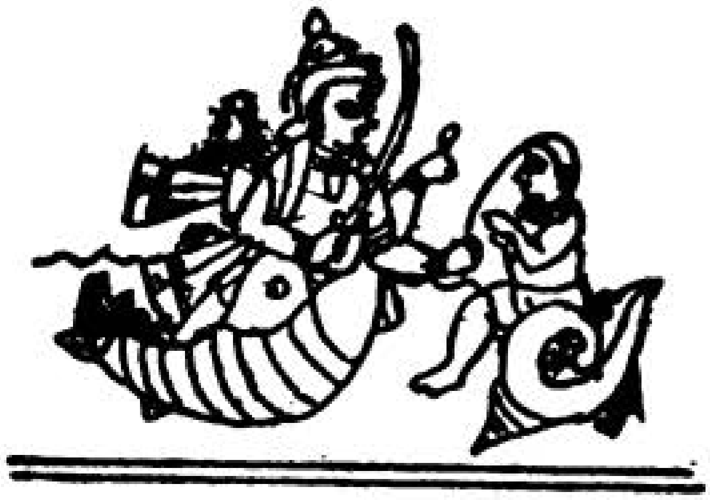
.2 Ea-Enki in his water-surrounded chamber; detail of Mesopotamian seal.
.4 Merman and Mermaid on Mesopotamian button-seal.

of the people who transmitted the legend was late. At any rate, the flood-and-creation myth (so natural in a Monsoon country) connects the first three *avatāras*, (figs 3, 5, 6, 7) Fish, Tortoise and Boar—surely related to primitive totemic worships. The Fish has its Mesopotamian counterparts (fig. 4). One performance of this Nārāyaṇa is shared by Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā*: the *viśva-rūpa- darśana* showing that the god contains the whole universe; he individvally represents the best specimen of each species in it. Though familiar to most of us as in *Gīta* 10-11, there is a prototype version without Kṛṣṇa in *Mahābhārata* 3.186. 39-112, which shows that an all-pervading Nārāyaṇa had been invented much earlier.

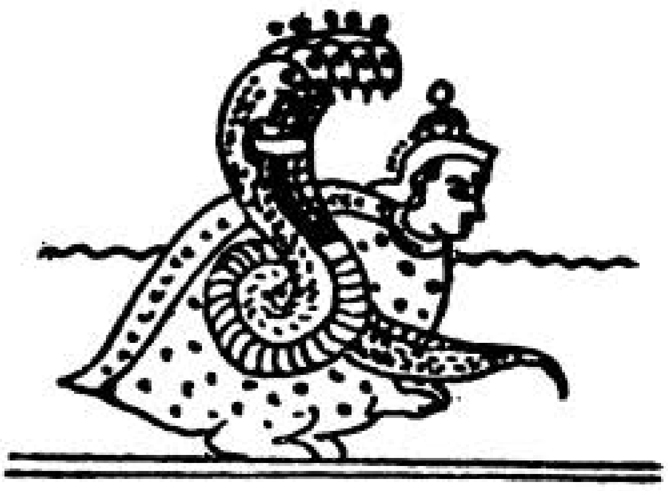
The speech-goddess *Vāg-ambhṛṇī*, in a famous but late hymn of the *Ṛgveda* (*RV*.10.125), declares that she draws Rudra's



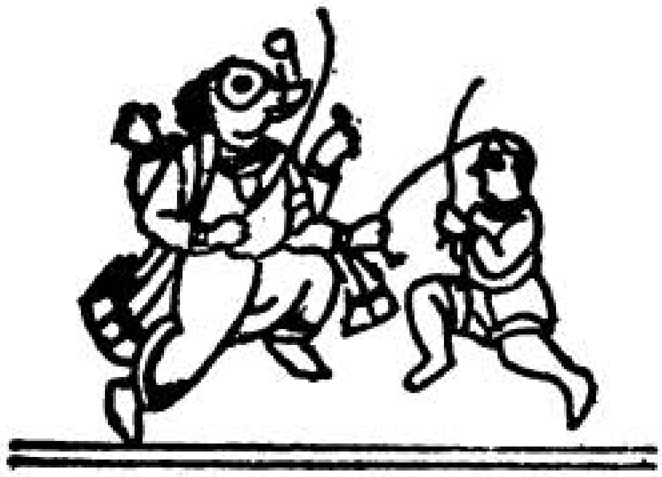
1.6 The Boar incarnation.



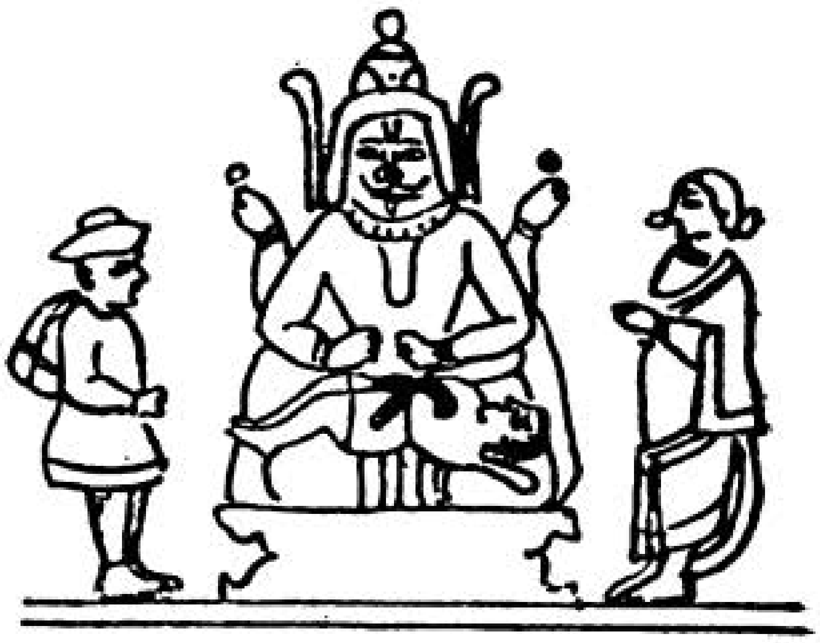
3 The Fish incarnation of Viṣṇu.



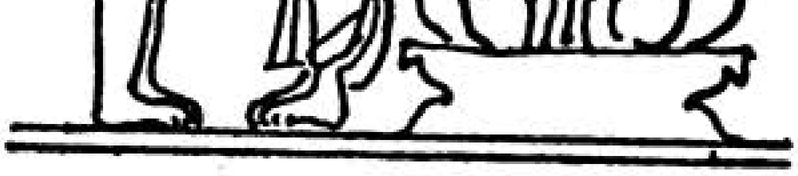
5 The Tortoise incarnation.



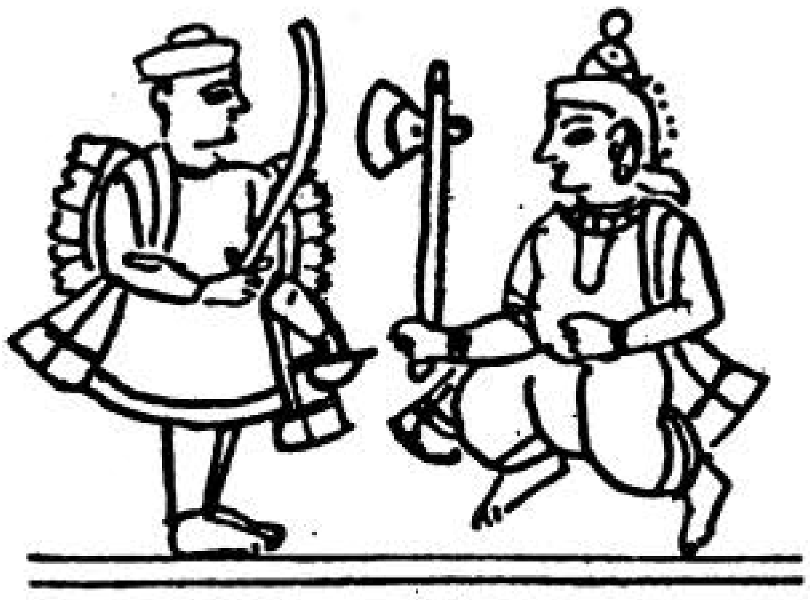
.7 The Boar incarnation.



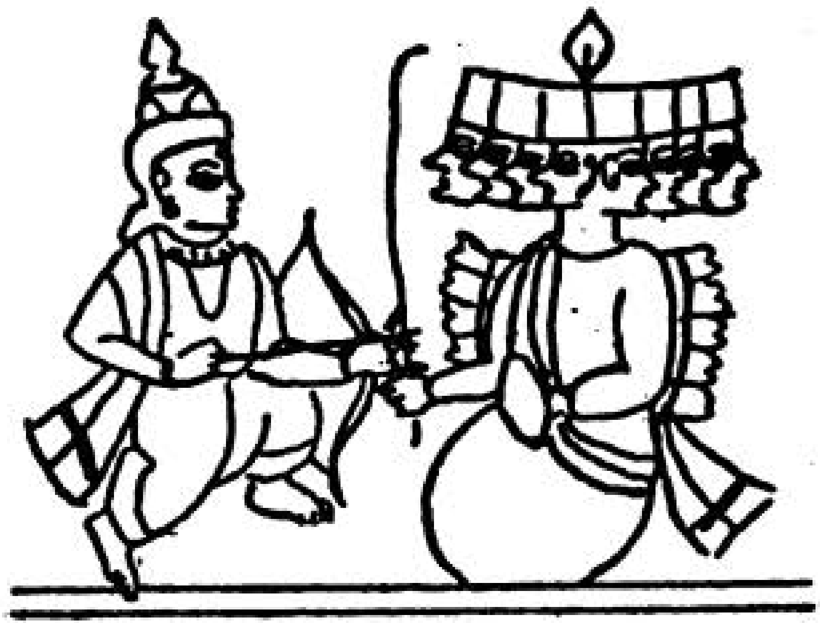
.8 The Man-lion (*narasiṃha*).



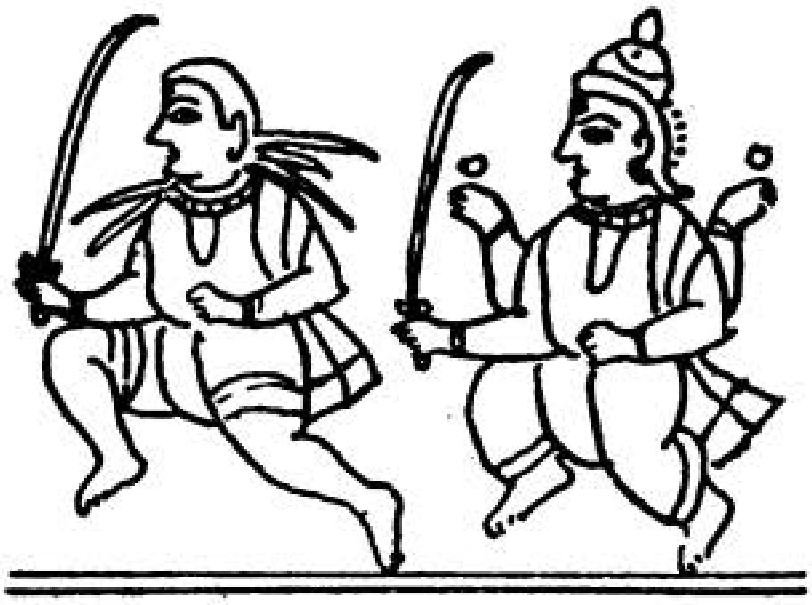
.9 The Dwarf (*vāmana*).



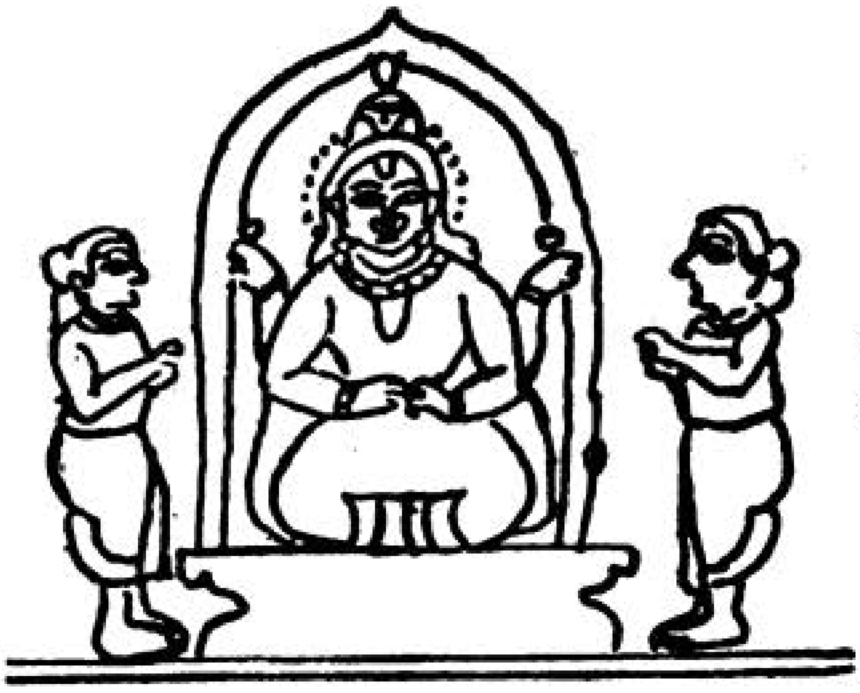
.10 Paraśurāma.



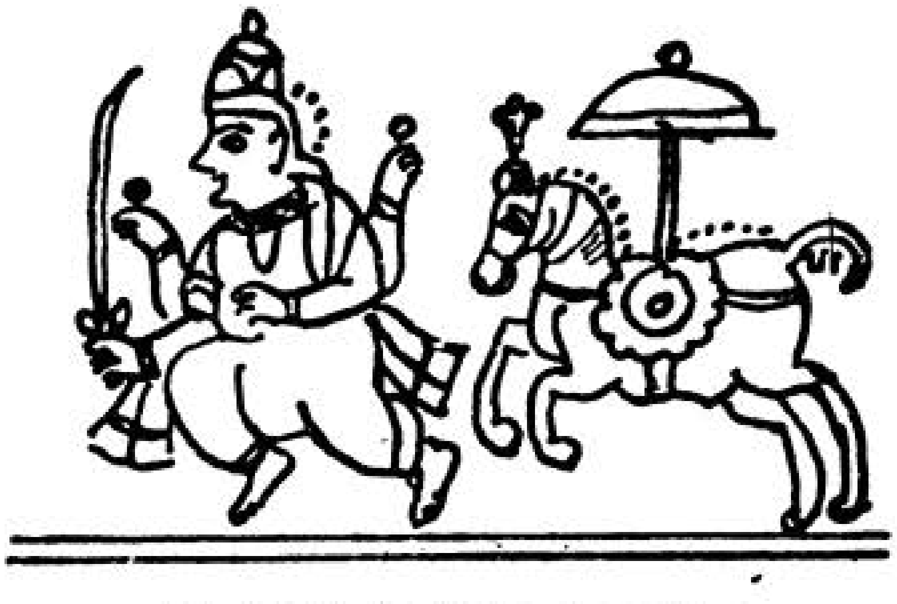
.11 Rāma.



.12 Kṛṣṇa.



.13 Buddha.

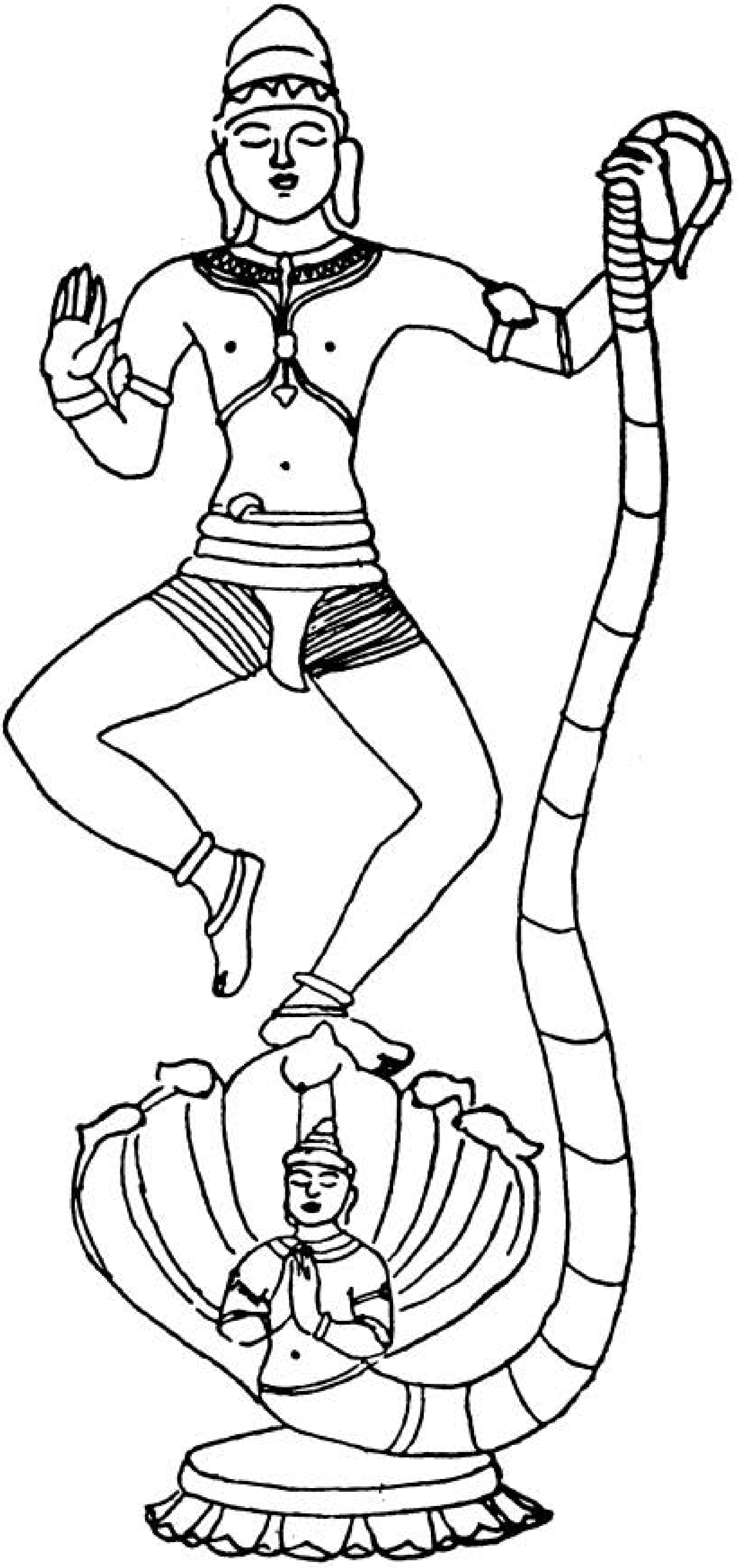


.14 Kalki, the future incarnation.

bow, and is herself Soma and the substance of all that is best. The original god whose misdeeds are never sin is surely the upaniṣadic Indra who says to Pratardana Daivodāsi: "Know thou Me alone; this indeed do I deem man's supreme good—that he should know Me. I slew the three-headed Tvāṣtra, threw the Arurmagha ascetics to the wolves, and transgressing many a treaty, I pierced through and through the Prahlādīyans in the heavens, the Paulomas in the upper air, and the Kālakāñjas on this earth. Yet such was I then that I never turned a hair. So, he who understands Me, his world is not injured by any deed whatever of his: not by his killing his own mother, by killing his own father, by robbery, killing an embryo, or the commission of any sin whatever does his complexion fade" *Kunṣītaki Brāhmaṇa Up.*, 3.2). The 'breaking many a treaty' is again the *Arthaśāstra* king's normal practice, though that book mentions that in olden days even a treaty concluded by simple word of mouth was sacred (*AŚ*, 7.17). Indra performed all these dismal feats in Vedic tradition, but that tradition nowhere makes him proclaim himself as the supreme object for *bhakti*; *pāpa* and *bhakti* are not Vedic concepts. No Vedic god can bestow plenary absolution as in *G.* 18.66: "Having cast off all (other) beliefs, rites and observances, yield to Me alone; I shall deliver you from all sins, never fear." The reason Kṛṣṇa could do this and not Indra was that the older god was clearly circumscribed by immutable Vedic *sūktas* and tied to the Vedic *yajña* fire-ritual. He was the model of the barbarous Aryan war-leader who could get drunk with his followers and lead them to victory in the fight. His lustre had been sadly tarnished by intervening Buddhism, which had flatly denied *yajña* and brought in a whole new conception of morality and social justice. The pastoral form of bronze age society with which Indra was indissolubly connected had gone out of productive existence.

Kṛṣṇa or rather one of the many Kṛṣṇas represented this antagonism. The legend of his enmity to Indra reflects in the *Ṛgveda*[16] the historical struggle of the dark pre-Aryans against the marauding Aryans. The black skin-colour was not an insurmountable obstacle, for we find a Kṛṣṇa Āṅgirasa as a Vedic seer. The Yadus are a Vedic tribe too, but no Kṛṣṇa seems associated with them though the 'bound Yadu' prisoner of war is mentioned. There was a 'Kṛṣṇa the son of Devakī' to whom

Ghora Āṅgirasa imparted some moral discipline, according to *Chāndogya Up.*, 3.17.1-7. The Mahānubhāvas take Sāṃdīpani as Kṛṣṇa's *guru*, and a few include the irascible Durvāsa in the list of his teachers. Kṛṣṇa the athletic Kaṃsa-killer could beat anyone in the arena, whether or not he was the same Kṛṣṇa who



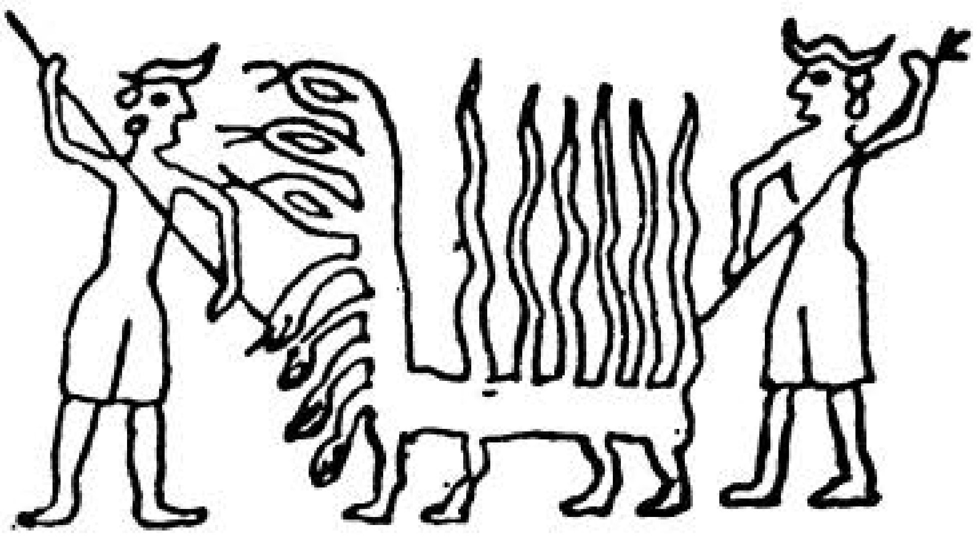
15 Kāliya trampled by Kṛṣṇa.

trampled down Kāliya (fig. 15), the many-headed *Nāga* snake-demon that infested the Yamuna river at Mathura. Naturally the Greeks who saw his cult in India at the time of Alexander's invasion identified Kṛṣṇa with their own Herakles.

One feature of the Kṛṣṇa myth, which still puzzles Indians, would have been quite familiar to the Greeks. The incarnate god was killed—unique in all Indian tradition—by an arrow shot into his heel, as were Achilles and other Bronze-age heroes. Moreover, the archer Jaras is given in most accounts as Kṛṣṇa's half-brother, obviously the tanist of the sacred king who had to kill the senior twin. Kṛṣṇa himself consoles the repentant killer, and absolves him by saying that his own time had come; the sacred king's appointed term had ended. One might venture the guess that the original unpardonable sin committed by Indra and perhaps by Kṛṣṇa as well was the violation of matriarchal custom, unthinkable in the older society, but which they managed to survive triumphantly, and in comparison to which all other sins paled into insignificance. Certainly, the *gokula* in which Kṛṣṇa was brought up would be patriarchal, as a cattle-herders' commune. But the *Vṛndāvana* where he played his pranks was sacred to a mother-goddess, the goddess of a group (*vṛnda*) symbolized by the Tulasī (Basil) plant. Kṛṣṇa had to marry that goddess, and is still married to her every year, though she does not appear in the normal list of his wives; originally, this meant a *hieros gamos* with the priestess who represented the goddess, and the annual sacrifice of the male consort. Inasmuch as there is no myth of Kṛṣṇa's annual sacrifice, but only of his having substituted for the husband, he seems to have broken the primitive usage, as did Herakles and Theseus.

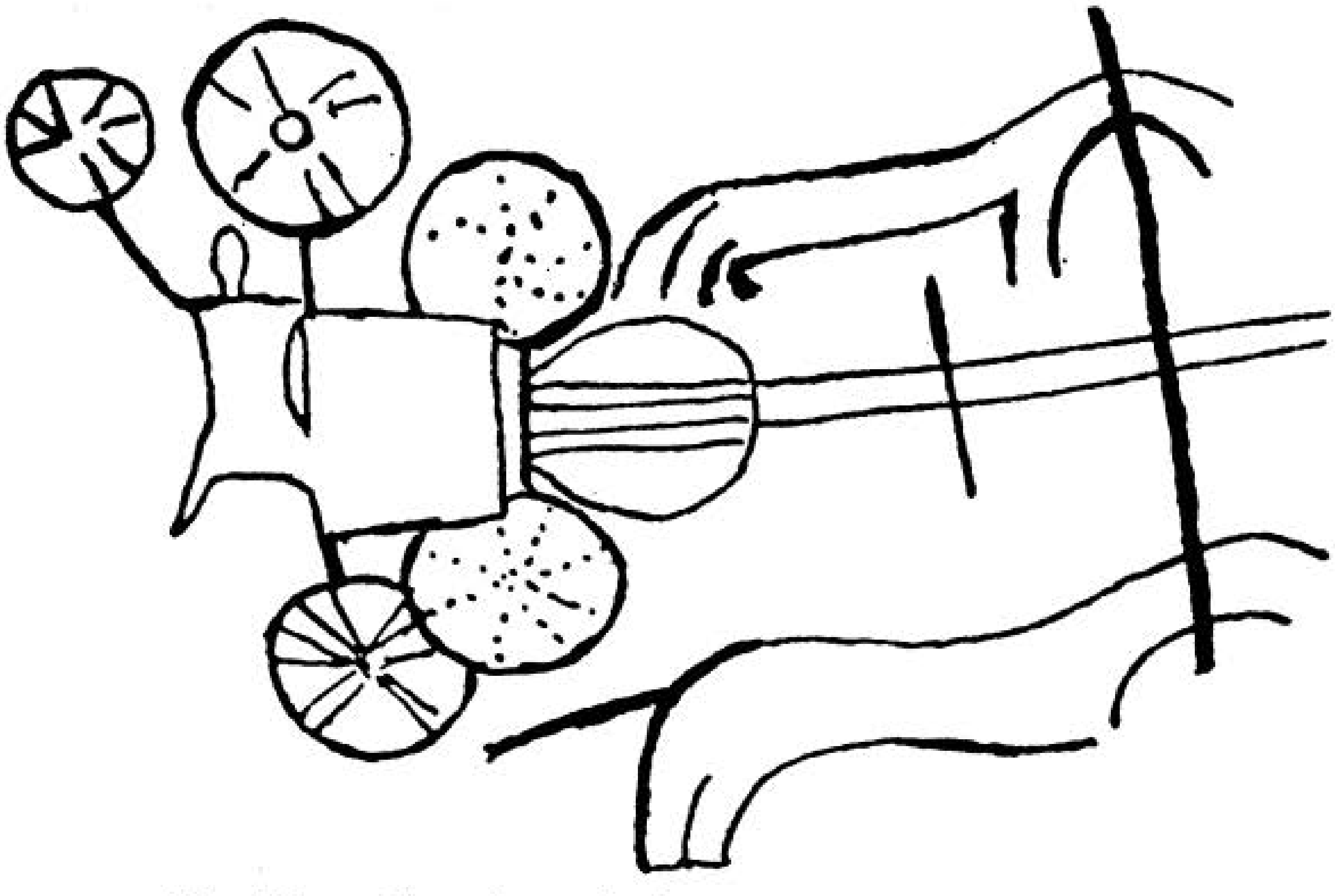
The taming of the *Nāga* has perhaps a deeper significance than Herakles decapitating the Hydra, a feat still earlier portrayed (fig. 16) in the Mesopotamian glyptic. The *Nāga* was the patron deity, perhaps aboriginal cult-object of the place. The trampling down of Kāliya instead of killing indicates the obvious survival of *Nāga* worship, and parallels the action of *Mahiṣāsura-mardinī*. Such cults survive to this day, as for example that of Maṇi-nāga, which has come down through the centuries near Orissa. Nilamata-nāga, for whom the brāhmaṇas wrote a special Purāṇa,[17] was the primitive deity of Kashmīr. The Nāga Śrīkaṇṭha had to be faced in a duel by Puṣyabhūti, king of Thanesar. Such local guardian nāgas are current down to the 10th century work *Navasāhasāṅkac rita.* So, our hero had a considerable following among the Indian people, even in the 4th century *B.C.* By the later Śunga period, he was called Bhagavat, originally the Buddha's title. A Greek ambassador Heliodoros[18] proclaims himself convert to the cult, on the pillar near Bhilsa. That Kṛṣṇa had risen from the pre-Aryan people is clear from a Pāṇinian reference (4.3.98, explained away by the commentator Patañjali) to the effect that neither Kṛṣṇa nor Arjuna counted as kṣatriyas. But his antiquity is considerable, for he is the one god who uses the sharp wheel, the missile discus, as his peculiar weapon. This particular weapon is not known to the Vedas and went out of fashion well before the time of the Buddha. Its historicity is attested only by cave paintings (fig. 17) in Mirzapur which show raiding horse-charioteers (clearly enemies of the aboriginal stone-age artists) one of whom is about to hurl such a wheel. The event and the painting may fairly be put at about 800 *B C.*[19] by which date the dark god was on the side of the angels, no longer an aborigine himself.

A historical tribe of Vṛṣṇis is actually known about the 2nd century A.D. by a single coin (fig. 18) in the British Museum found near Hoshiarpur in the Punjab. When Kṛṣṇa's people were driven out of Mathura by fear of Jarāsandha (*Mahābhārata,* 2.13.47-49 and 2.13.65), they retreated *westwards* to found a new mountain-locked city of Dvārakā, which is, therefore,



16 Killing of the seven-headed Hydra; detail of Mesopotamian seal.

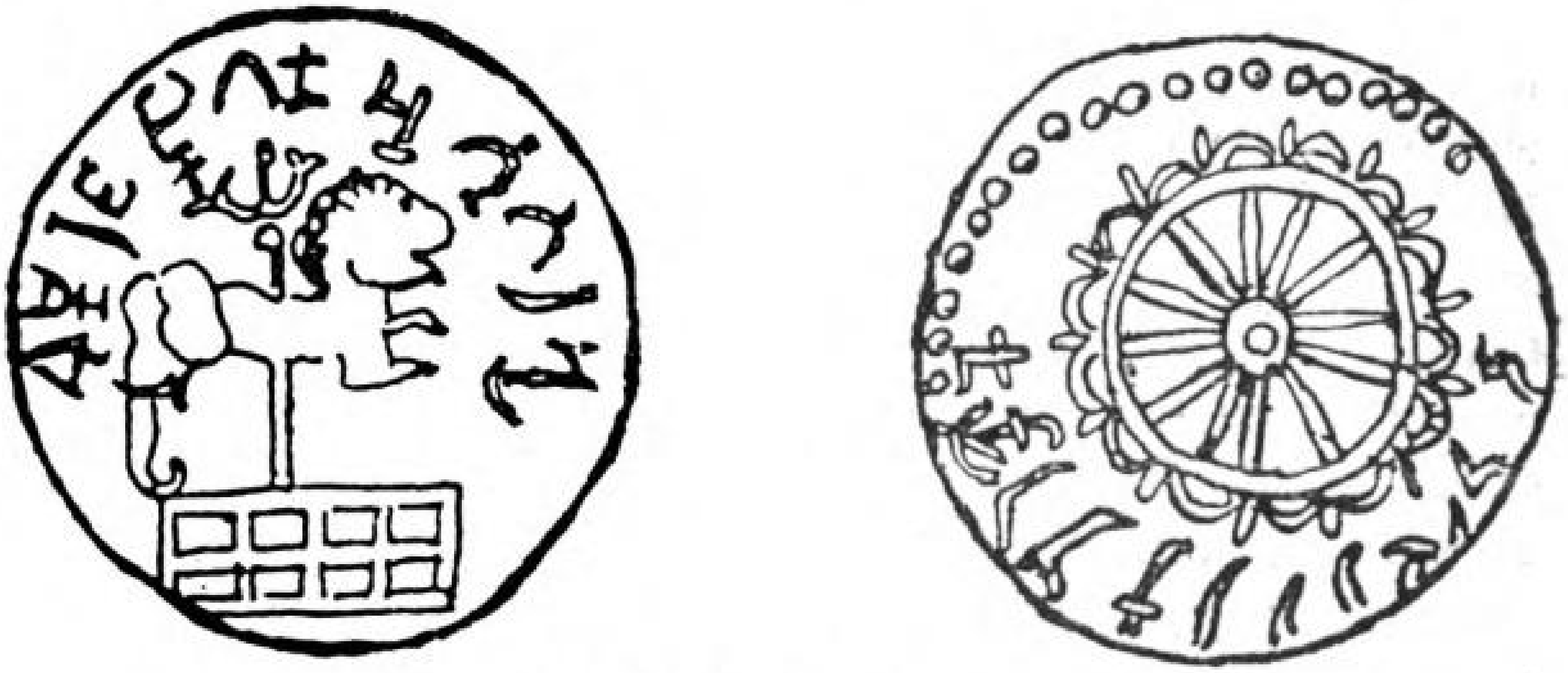
more likely to have been near modern Darwaz in Afghanistan rather than the Kathiawad seaport. When the Buddhist *Mahāmāyūri mantra* (*circa* 3rd century *A.D.*) speaks of Viṣṇu as the guardian *yakṣa* of Dvārakā, however (Sylvain Levi, *Journal Asiatique*, 1915.19.138; line 13 of Sanskrit text), presumably the latter city was meant; it is notable that Viṣṇu and not Kṛṣṇa is named. As for the Deccan Yādavas, the brāhmaṇas who found a genealogy which connected them to the dark god had no



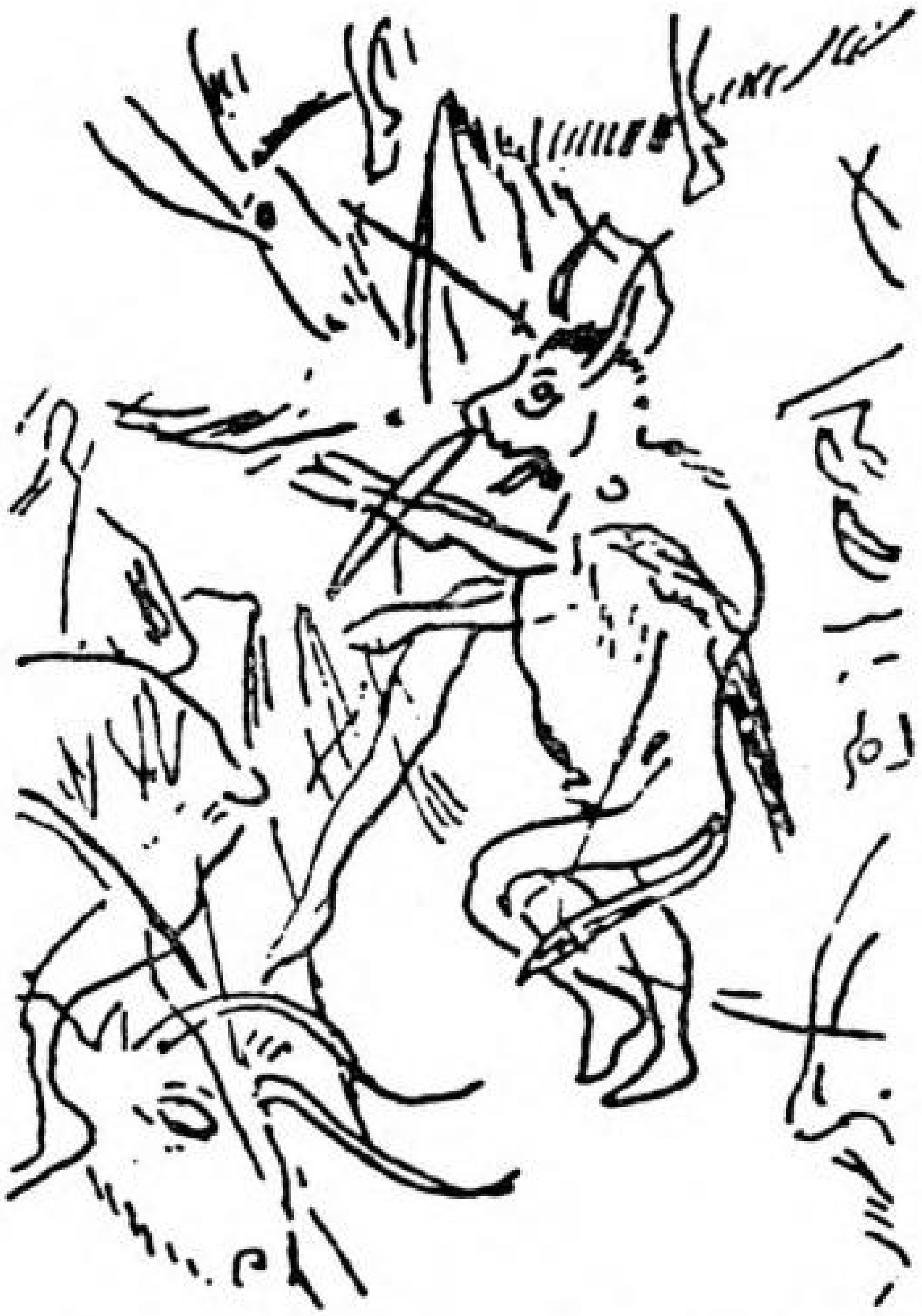
.17 Discus-throwing charioteer in a Mirzapur cave.

deeper aim in the forgery than to raise the chiefs of a local clan above the surrounding population.

Finally, there was also the useful messianic aspect as in *G.* 4.7.[20] The many proto-historic Kṛṣṇas and current belief in transmigration made the *avatāra* syncretism possible. It could also lead the devotee in his misery to hope for a new *avatāra*



.18a .18b Vṛṣṇi tribal coin (enlarged).



19 Diablotin at Les Trois Frères cave.

to deliver him from oppression in this world, as he hoped for salvation in the next.

When does a synthesis work?

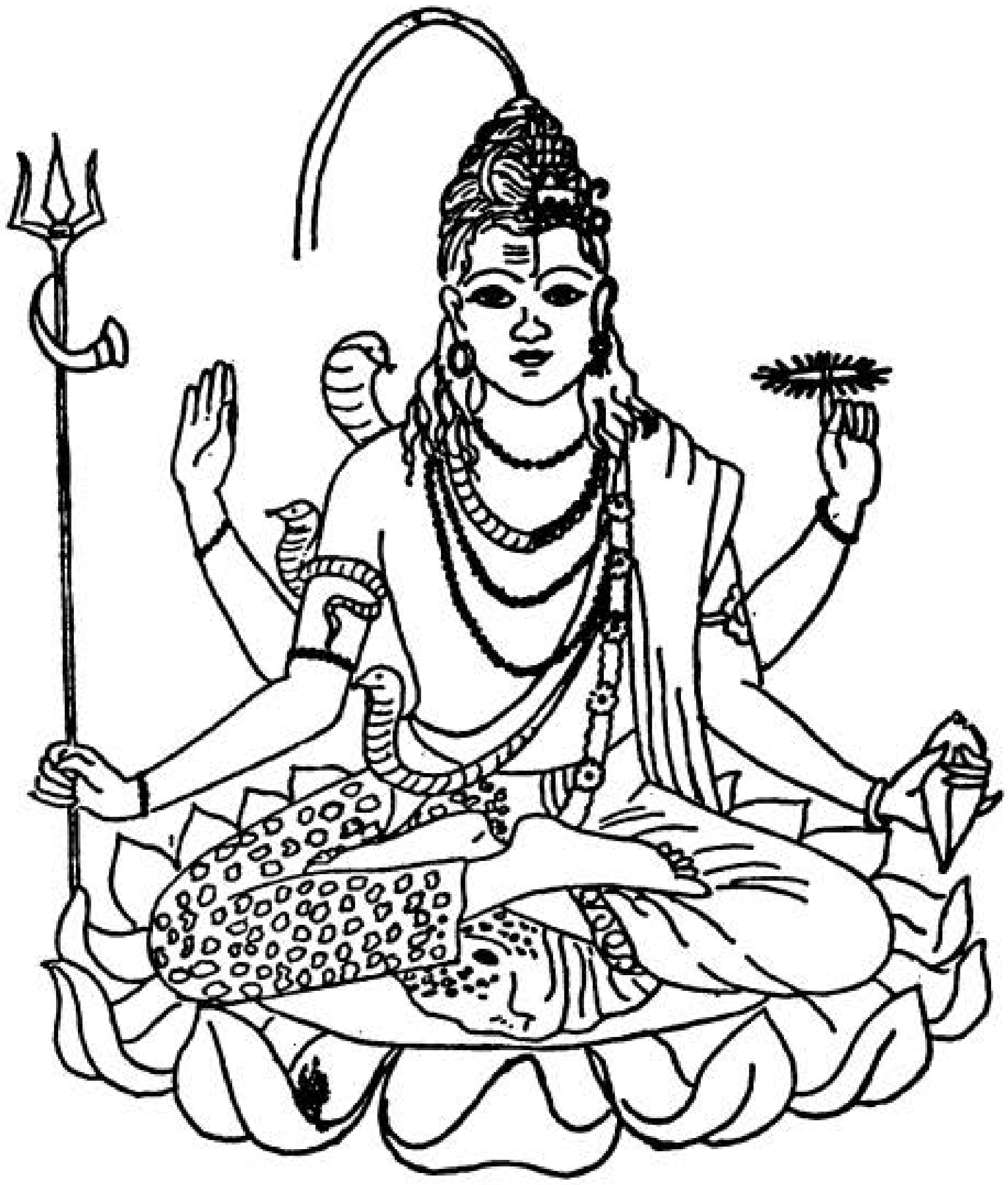
Like the *avatāras* of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, the various Kṛṣṇas gathered many different worships into one without doing violence to any, without smashing or antagonizing any. Kṛṣṇa the mischievous and beloved shepherd lad is not incompatible with Kṛṣṇa the extraordinarily virile husband of many women. His 'wives' were originally local mother-goddesses, each in her own right. The 'husband' eased the transition from mother-right to patriarchal life, and allowed the original cults to be practised on a subordinate level. This is even better seen in the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī which was supplemented by the *Ardhanārīśvara* hermaphrodite [half Śiva, half Pārvatī, (fig. 13) just to prevent any separation]. Mahiṣāsura (Mhasobā), the demon "killed" by that once independent goddess, is still occasionally worshipped near her temple (as at the foot of Parvati hill[21] in Poona). Sometimes, (as at Vīr) he is found married to a goddess (Jogubāī) now equated to Durgā while another goddess (Tukāī) similarly identified is shown crushing the buffalo demon on the adjacent hillock. The widespread Nāga cult was absorbed by putting the cobra about Śiva's neck, using him as the canopied bed on which Nārāyaṇa floats in perpetual sleep upon the waters, and putting him also in the hand of Gaṇeśa. The bull Nandi was worshipped by stone-age people long before Śiva had been invented to ride on his back. The list can be extended by reference to our complex iconography, and study of the divine households. Gaṇeśa's animal head and human body equate him to the 'sorcerers' and diablotins[22] painted by ice-age men (fig. 19) in European caves.

This is "in the Indian character", and we have remarked that a similar attitude is reflected in the philosophy of the *Gītā*. No violence is done to any preceding doctrine except Vedic *yajña*. The essential is taken from each by a remarkably keen mind capable of deep and sympathetic study; all are fitted together with consummate skill and literary ability, and cemented by *bhakti* without developing their contradictions. The thing to mark is that the Indian character was not always so tolerant.

There are periods when people came to blows over doctrine, ritual, and worship. Emperor Harṣa Śīlāditya (*circa* 600-640*A.D.*) of Kanauj found no difficulty in worshipping Gaurī, Maheśvara-Śiva, and the Sun, while at the same time he gave the fullest devotion to Buddhism.[23] His enemy Narendragupta-Śaśānka, raided Magadha from Bengal, cut down the Bodhi tree at Gaya, and wrecked Buddhist foundations wherever he could. What was the difference? Why was a synthesis of the two religions, actually practised by others besides Harṣa (as literary references can show) not successful?

Let me put it that the underlying difficulties were economic. Images locked up too much useful metal; monasteries and temples after the Gupta age withdrew far too much from circulation without replacement or compensation by adding to or stimulating production in any way. Thus, the most thoroughgoing iconoclast in Indian history was another king Harṣa (1089-1101 *A.D.*) who broke up all images[24] in Kashmir, except four that were spared. This was done systematically under a special minister *devotpāṭana-nāyaka*, without adducing the last theological excuse, though one could easily have been found. The Kashmirian king remained a man of culture, a patron of Sanskrit literature and the arts; he presumably read the *Gītā* too. But he needed funds for his desperate fight against the Ḍāmara group of local barons. The particular campaign was won, at the cost of making feudalism stronger than ever.

The conclusion to be drawn is that a dovetailing of the superstructure will be possible only when the underlying differences are not too great. Thus, the *Gītā* was a logical performance for the early Gupta period, when expanding village settlement brought in new wealth to a powerful central government. Trade was again on the increase, and many sects could obtain economic support in plenty. The situation had changed entirely by the time of Harṣa Śīlāditya, though many generous donations to monasteries were still made. The villages had to be more or less self-contained and self-supporting. Tax-collection by a highly centralized but non-trading state was no longer a paying proposition, because commodity production per head and cash trade were low;[25] this is fully attested by the the miserable coinage. The valuable, concentrated luxury trade of the Kuṣāṇa-Sātavāhana era had suffered relative decline in spite of feudal and monastic accumulation of gold, silver, jewels, etc. Once magnificent cities like Patna, no longer necessary for production, had dwindled to villages containing ruins which people could regard only as the work of superhuman beings. There was no longer enough for all; one or the other group had to be driven to the wall. One such instance is the combined Hari-Hara cult [with an image half Śiva, half Viṣṇu (fig. 20) which had its brief day but could not remain in fashion much beyond the 11th century. The followers of Hari and Hara found their interests too widely separated, and we have the *smārta-vaiṣṇava* struggle instead. With Mughal prosperity at its height, Akbar could dream of a synthetic *Din-e-ilāhī*; Aurangzeb could only try to augment his falling revenue by increased religious persecution and the *Jīzyā* tax on unbelievers.



20 Hari-Hara.

To sum up, writing the *Gītā* was possible only in a period when it was not absolutely necessary. Śankara could not do without the intense polemic of theological controversy. To treat all views tolerantly and to merge them into one implies that the crisis in the means of production is not too acute. Fusion and tolerance become impossible when the crisis deepens, when there is not enough of the surplus product to go around, and the synthetic method does not lead to increased production. Marrying the gods to goddesses had worked earlier because the conjoint society produced much more after differences between matriarchal and patriarchal forms of property were thus reconciled. The primitive deities adopted into Śiva's or Viṣṇu's household helped enlist food-gathering aboriginals into a much greater food-producing society. The alternative would have been extermination or enslavement, each of which entailed violence with excessive strain upon contemporary production. The Vedic Aryans who tried naked force had ultimately to recombine with the autochthonous people. The *Gītā* might help reconcile certain factions of the ruling class. Its inner contradictions could stimulate some exceptional reformer to make the upper classes admit a new reality by recruiting new members. But it could not possibly bring about any fundamental change in the means of production, nor could its fundamental lack of contact with reality and disdain for logical consistency promote a rational approach to the basic problems of Indian society.

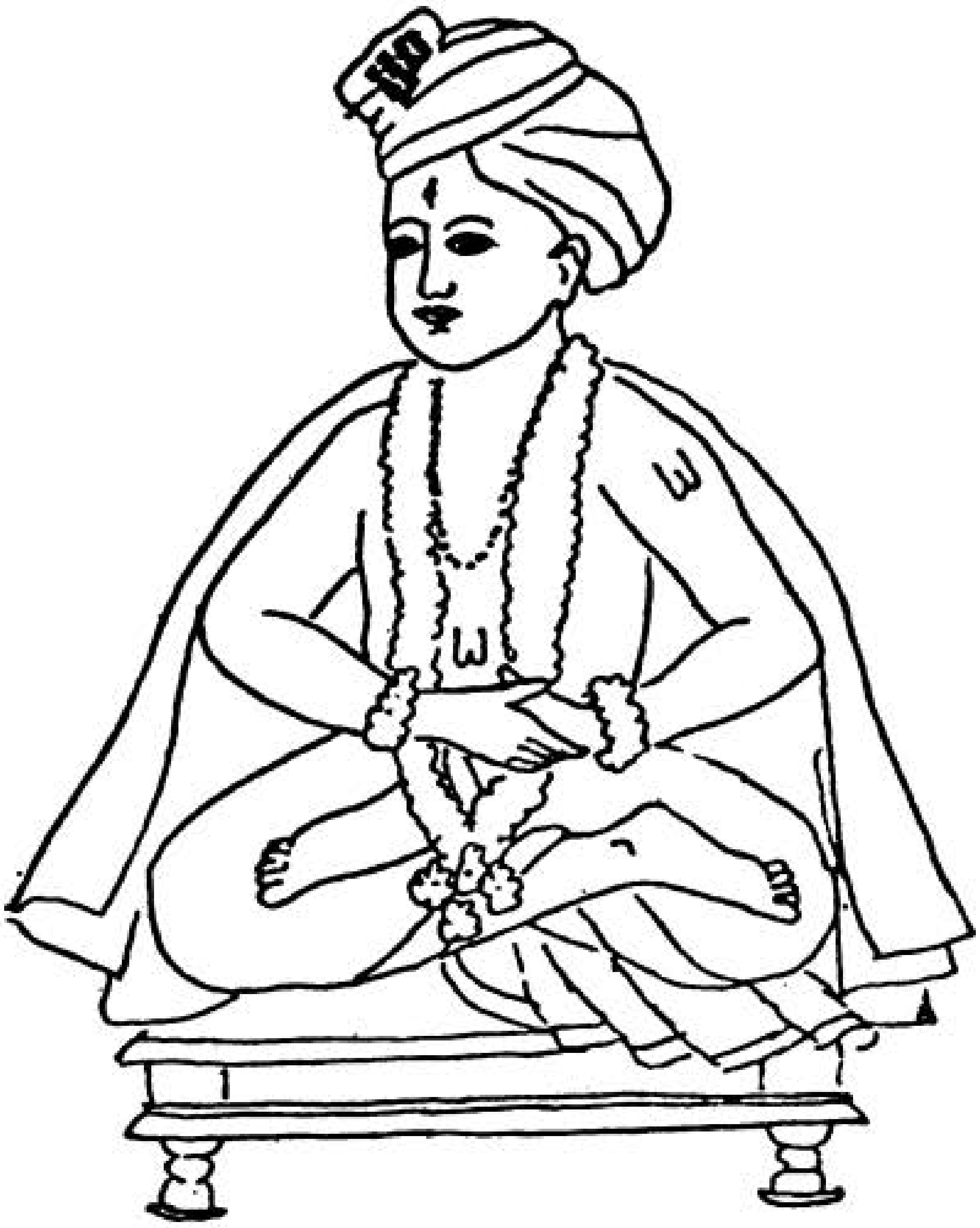
The social functions of bhakti

However, the *Gītā* did contain one innovation which precisely fitted the needs of a later period : *bhakti*, personal devotion. To whoever composed that document, *bhakti* was the justification, the one way of deriving all views from a single divine source. As we have seen from the demand for the quite insipid *Anu-Gītā* sequel, this did not suffice in its own day. But with the end of the great centralized personal empires in sight—Harṣa's being the last—the new state had to be feudal from top to bottom. The essence of fully developed feudalism is the chain of personal loyalty which binds retainer to chief, tenant to lord, and baron to king or emperor. Not loyalty in the abstract but with a secure foundation in the means and relations of production: land ownership, military service, tax-collection and the conversion of local produce into commodities through the magnates. This system was certainly not possible before the end of the 6th century *A.D.* The key word[26] is *sāmanta* which till 532 at least meant 'neighbouring ruler' and by 592 *A.D.* had come to mean feudal baron. The new barons were personally responsible to the king, and part of a tax-gathering mechanism. The *Manusmṛti* king, for example, had no *sāmantas*; he had to administer everything himself, directly or through agents without independent status. The further development of feudalism 'from below' meant a class of people at the village level who had special rights over the land (whether of cultivation, occupation, or hereditary ownership) and performed special armed service as well as service in tax-collection. To hold this type of society and its state together, the best religion is one which emphasizes the role of *bhakti*, personal faith, even though the object of devotion may have clearly visible flaws.

Innumerable medieval rustic 'hero' stones[27] commemorate the death in battle—usually a local cattle-raid—of an individual whose status was above that of the ordinary villager. In older days, the duty of protecting the disarmed villages would have been performed by the *gulma* garrisoning the locality. The right to bear arms (with the concomitant obligation to answer a call to arms) was now distributed among a select class of persons scattered through the villages. Many inscriptions vaunt the Gānga barons' sacrifice of their own heads in front of some idol, to confer benefit upon their king. More than one epigraph declares the local warrior's firm intention not to survive his chief.[28] Marco Polo[29] reported of the 13th century Pāṇḍyas that the seigneurs actually cast themselves upon the king's funeral pyre, to be consumed with the royal corpse. This suits the *bhakti* temperament very well. Though barbarous, it is not the type of loyalty that a savage tribal chief could expect or receive from his followers, unless his tribe were in some abnormal situation.

Though *bhakti* was the basic need in feudal ideology, its fruits were not enjoyed equally by all. By the 12th century, feudal taxation had begun to weigh heavily upon the peasantry, who paid not only for the luxurious palace but also its counterpart the equally rich and even more ornate temple. Brahmaṇism had definitely come to the top, as may be seen from two monumental collections of the period, namely the *Kṛtyakalpataru* of Bhaṭṭa Lakṣmīdhara (minister of Govindacandra Gāhaḍavāla of Kanauj, circa 1150 *A.D.*); and a century later, Hemādri's quite similar *Caturvargacintāmaṇi.* The latter was chancellor of the exchequer (*mahā-karaṇādhipa*) under the last Yādavas of Devagiri (Daulatabad). He is described as the outstanding computer (*gaṇakāgraṇi*). A few tables for quick assessment survive in Hemādri's name; the name is also (wrongly) coupled in Maraṭhi tradition with the general use of *bājrī* as cultivated food-grain, the cursive *Moḍī* alphabet, and the mumerous close-jointed mortarless Yādava temples that had been built centuries earlier, to develop from little shrines of matchless proportion and balance into rank clumsy, richly endowed structures by the 12th century. Yet his *magnum opus,* far from being another *Arthaśāstra,* or an '*Ain-i-Akbarī*' or an Indian *Corpus Juris Civilis,* is concerned almost entirely with brāhmaṇical rites and ritual codified from Purāṇas and other accepted religious books. The published seven volumes contain perhaps three fifths of the original. Any person who performed even a tenth of the special rites prescribed for any given deity, lunar date, transgression, celebration, worship, festival or occasion would have no time for anything else; as a document of a superstitious leisure class, none other known today will bear comparison with it. A section on jurisprudence preserved in Lakṣmīdhara's compendium shows that common law was practised and decisions for each caste, tribe, and locality based upon their particular custom; but the work repeats *smṛti* doctrine without mention of the innovations in practice, or discussion of a single case.

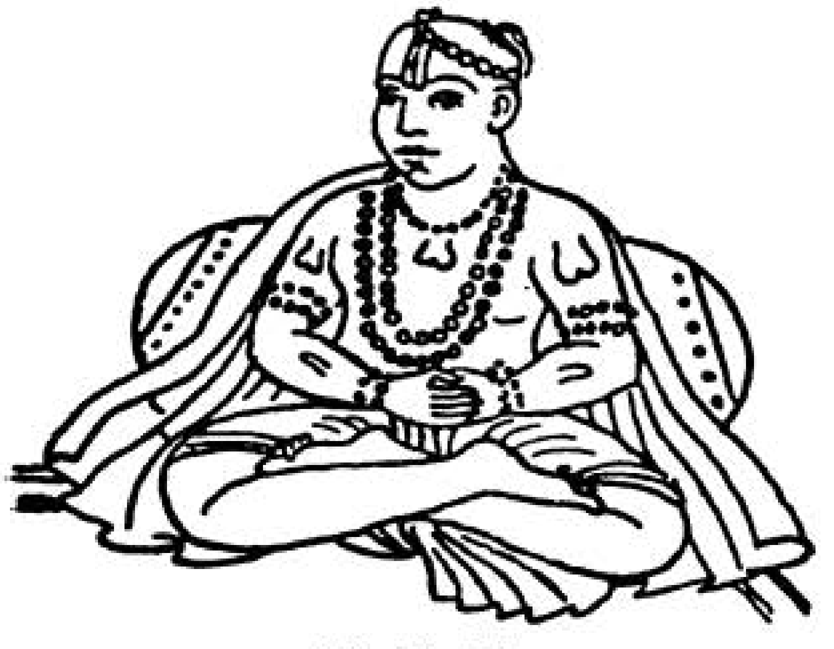
The protest was expressed in Maharashtra by two different groups, both oriented towards Kṛṣṇa worship and—remarkably enough—supported by primitive survivals. The *Mahānubhāva* or *Mānbhāv* sect was founded by Cakradhara in the 12th century, and went back to the ideals of tribal, communal life. Black garments, absolute rejection of the caste system, organization into clan-like sub-groups, sharing among members, and a greatly simplified marriage ritual (*gaḍa-baḍa-guṇḍā*) prove this, though a few leaders of the sect later accumulated some property, with a concomitant thirst for Hindu respectability. The other movement, crystallized by Jñāneśvara was particularly strong among the seasonal *vārkarī* pilgrims to Pa*ṇḍ*harpur, who followed a custom which seems to date back to the mesolithic age. Jñāneśvara was under brāhma*ṇ*a interdict, as begotten by an apostate monk; his aged parents drowned themselves in the Ganges while he himself committed ritual suicide at Alandi, after a short but exceptionally bitter life. The Maratha saints who followed him all wrote like him in the vernacular, had personally experienced the hardships of the common people and came from all castes. Nāmadeva, though a tailor, carried the new doctrine to the far north, with success. I am told that some of his work was absorbed directly into the Sikh Canon (*Granth Saheb*), or provided stimulus and inspiration even at so great a distance to what became a great religious movement among the common people of the Punjab. Gorā was a potter by caste and craft. The untouchable Cokhā Me*ḷ*ā was killed by collapse of



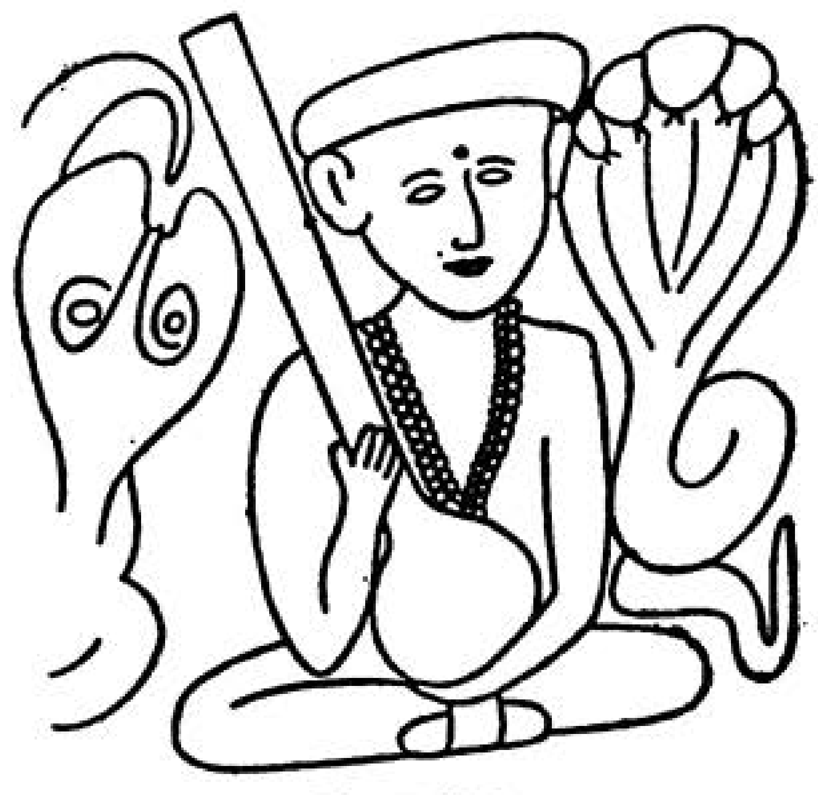
21 Jñāneśvara

Mangaḷveḍhe town wall for the construction of which he had been pressed by coveé, old as he was. The Paithan brāhmaṇa Eknātha (fig. 22), to whom we owe the present text of the *Jñāneśvarī* (in 1590 *A.D.*) as well as many fine Marathi poems, went out of his way to break the crudest restrictions of untouchability. The greatest of them all, the 16th century *kuṇabī* peasant and petty grain dealer Tukārāma survived grim famine, the unremitting jealousy of contemporary folk-poets, and the contemptuous hatred of brāhmaṇas, ultimately to drown himself in the river. These men represent a general movement by no means confined to their province and language. The generally painful tenor of their lives shows that they were in the opposition, and did not care to exercise the meretricious art of pleasing those in power—quite unlike the brāhmaṇas, who did not scorn to develop the cult of these saints whenever it paid, but always pandered to the rich.

The real military strength of the Marathas, as later of the Sikhs, derived obviously from the simpler, less caste-ridden, and less unequal life. The later Maratha generals like the Shinde and Gaekwad rose from relatively obscure families, unlike the earlier and more distinguished Candrarao More, Bhonsle and



22 Eknāth.



.23 Tukārāma

Jādhava, the last of whom might claim kinship with the Yādava emperors of Devagiri and through them perhaps with Kṛṣṇa himself. Malharrao Holkar was of the Dhangar shepherd caste, and would normally not have been allowed to rise to the status of a general, duke, and eventually king. It seems to me that some of this goes back, like the *bhagvā jheṇḍā* flag of Maratha armies, to Vārkarī custom. In spite of the brāhmaṇa *Baḍave* priests, and the rampant brāhmaṇism of the Peshwa days, the Vārkarī pilgrims minimized caste observances and distinctions on the journey. However, the reform and its struggle was never consciously directed against feudalism, so that its very success meant feudal patronage—and ultimately feudal decay by diversion of a democratic movement into the dismal channels of conquest and rapine.

The conglomerate *Gītā* philosophy might provide a loophole for innovation, but never the analytical tools necessary to make a way out of the social impasse. Jñāneśvara's life and tragic career illustrate this in full measure. He does not give a literal translation of the divine message, but its meaning and essence in his own terms, and in words that any Maratha peasant could understand. Jñāneśvara's longest comment on the original comes in the 13th *adhyāya* of the *Gītā*, the chapter on the field and field-knower', particularly on *G.* 13.7 (where he himself apologizes in *J.* 13. 314-338 for having been carried away far from the original) and on *G.* 13.11. In the former (*J.* 13.218-224), he flays the rainmaking *yājñika* fire-sacrificers; yet in *J.* 3. 134-5, these very sacrifices were taken as normal and necessary by him as by his divine exemplar; and once again (*G.* 18.5; *J.* 18.149-152) both warn us that the *yajña* must not be abandoned any more than charity (*dāna*) or ascetic practices (*tapas*). The suffocating contradictions of mixed superstition are neatly brought out in *J.* 13.812-822: "The peasant farmer sets up cult after cult, according to convenience. He follows the preacher who seems most impressive at the moment, learns his mystic formula. Harsh to the living, he relies heavily on stones and images; but even then never lives true to any one of them. He will have My (=Kṛṣṇa's) image made, established in a corner of the house, and then go off on pilgrimages to some god or other. He will pray to Me daily, but also worship the family's tutelary deity at need, and other gods as well, each at the particular auspicious moment. He founds My cult, but makes vows to others; on anniversary days, he is devoted to the ancestral Manes. The worship he gives Us on the eleventh (lunar date) is no more than that he renders to the sacred cobras on the fifth. He is devotee solely of Gaṇeśa on the (annual) fourth; on the fourteenth, says he, 'Mother Durgā, I am yours alone'. . .At the Nine Nights (of the Mother-goddesses) he will recite the set praise of Caṇḍī, serve meals outdoors on the Sunday, and rush off on Monday with a *bel* fruit offering to Śiva's phallic symbol. Thus he prays unemittingly, never still for a moment, like a prostitute at the town gate". In Jñāneśvara's society, however, such eclectic worship was the universal practice at all levels, to the very highest people for whom Lakṣmīdhara and Hemādri indited their monstrous compendia. To that extent, though indirectly, the commentator voices a protest against the growth of an oppressive upper class. The *Gītā* doctrine is given a remarkably attractive turn by Jñāneśvara's quite original interpretation (*J.* 9.460-470): "Kṣatriya, vaiśya, woman, śūdra and untouchable retain their separate existence only so long as they have not attained Me. . .Just as rivers have their individual names, whether coming from east or west, only till they merge into the ocean. Whatever be the reason for which one's mind enters into Me, he then becomes Me, even as the iron that strikes to break the philosopher's stone turns into gold at the contact. So, by carnal love like the milkmaids, Kaṃsa in fear, Śiśupāla by undying hatred, Vasudeva and the Yādavas by kinship, or Nārada, Dhruva, Akrūra, Śuka and Sanatkumāra through devotion—they all attained Me. I am the final resting place, whether they come to Me by the right or the wrong path, *bhakti*, lust or the purest love, or in enmity". Neither the callous *G.* 9.32 on which this charming comment is made, nor the fundamentally brutal Kṛṣṇa saga manifest such a calm elevation above jealous, exclusive *bhakti*. Yet, on the very next stanza, the scholiast extols brāhmaṇas as veritable gods on earth! His rejection by contemporary brāhmaṇas, which must surely have been a main reason for the decision to render the *Gītā* into Marathi, never prevented him from striving after the brāhmaṇa Vedic lore officially denied to all but initiates. That is, he embodied the inner contradictions which he discerned in contemporary society but failed to discover in the *Gītā*. Therefore, he could launch no movement towards their solution. Though an adept in *yoga* as a path towards physical immortality and mystical perfection (*cf. J.* on *G.* 6.13-15), there was nothing left for him except suicide. That the gods remained silent at the unexpected Muslim blow which devastated their many richly endowed temples and no incarnation of *Kṛṣṇa* turned up to save the Yādava kingdom, might have been another cause for despair.

The Gītā Today

The main social problem was violently placed upon a new footing by Alauddin Khilji and the Muslim conquest which imposed payment of heavy tribute. This intensified the need for more effective tax collection; that in turn encouraged a new powerful but more efficient feudalism. Some optimists have maintained that the poorer classes benefited because Alauddin squeezed only the rich, who were rendered powerless. This disingenuous view carefully neglects to mention that even in the Doabs (which were directly administered) none of the former burdens of the peasantry were lifted. Their dues were collected by a different agency, though it remains true that the Hindu upper classes were prevented for a while from imposing fresh exactions. The provinces had not even this consolation, for the throne of Delhi exacted harsh tribute from conquered areas, without troubling itself about how provincial magnates gathered it—and how much more besides. Local military power was reduced only to a stage where it constituted little danger to the imperial forces, but the mechanism of violence more than sufficed for its main purpose, revenue collection. Whether the tribute was actually paid or not, and even over regions not subject to tribute, the imposts and exactions grew steadily. The class that collected the surplus retained an increasing portion, so that the needs of the state could be satisfied only in the earlier period, when feudalism stimulated trade and fresh agrarian production. Then the crisis was aggravated, to be resolved by another foreign conquest that introduced a totally different form of production, the bourgeois-capitalist. The modern independence movement did not challenge the productive form; it only asked that the newly developed Indian bourgeoisie be in power.

Modern life is founded upon science and freedom. That is, modern production rests in the final analysis upon accurate cognition of material reality (science), and recognition of necessity (freedom). A myth may grip us by its imagery, and may indeed have portrayed some natural phenomenon or process at a time when mankind had not learned to probe nature's secrets or to discover the endless properties of matter. Religion clothes some myth in dogma. "Science needs religion" is a poor way of saying that the scientist and those who utilize his discoveries must not dispense with social ethics. There is no need to dig into the *Gītā* or the Bible for an ethical system sandwiched with pure superstition. Such books can still be enjoyed for their aesthetic value. Those who claim more usually try to shackle the minds of other people, and to impede man's progress, under the most specious claims.

Individual human perfection on the spiritual plane becomes much easier when every individual's material needs are first satisfied on a scale agreed upon as reasonable[30] by the society of his day. That is, the main root of evil is social. The fundamental causes of social evil are no longer concealed from human sight. Their cure does not lie in theology but in socialism; the application of modern science, based upon logical deduction from planned experiment, to the structure of society itself. Science is at the basis of modern production; and no other tools of production are in sight for the satisfaction of man's needs. Moreover, the material needs could certainly be satisfied for all, if the relations of production did not hinder it.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1] *Mahābhārata*, 6.23-40 of the Poona edition, begun under the editorship of the late V. S. Sukthankar, with the *Ādi*, *Sabhā*, *Āraṇyaka*, *Udyoga* and *Virāṭa parvans* completed under his direction. Succeeding volumes have been less satisfactory, and the edition is not yet complete. For the *Gītā* in particular, the readings generally assumed to be Śankara's have been retained against the norm accepted for the rest of the edition. Among the many useful translations of the *Gītā* are those of F. Edgerton (Harvard Oriental Series), K. T. Telang (Sacred Books of the East), and S. Radhakrishnan (London, 1948).

[2] R. G. Bhandārkar's *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, and Minor Religious Systems* (originally published in 1913 in the *Grundriss d. Indo-Arischen Philologie u. Altertumskunde*; re-issued, Poona 1929, in vol. IV of his collected works) gives a good summary of the influence of the doctrine in the classical and medieval period, but without reference to the historical context, which was indeed not known at the time. Its influence upon Bhandarkar himself led to a petty reformist movement, the Prarthana Samaja, (an offshoot of the Brahmo Samaja) in which RGB was the dominant figure; and support of widow remarriage, then unheard of for brāhmaṇas, though practised by some 85% at least of the population. That he spoke for a very narrow class in the attempt to speak for the whole of India never struck him, nor for that matter other contemporary 'reformers'. Still the silent change of emphasis from caste to class was a necessary advance.

[3] In particular, the translation of *dharma* as religion, or even a univesal Law for all society was a new concept with Buddhism, not accepted even after the time of the *G*. For example: *Manu*, 8.41 reads: "The (king) must inquire into the laws (*dharma*) of each caste (*jāti*), district (*janapada*), guild (*śreṇī*) and household (*kula*), and only then give his own legal decision (*svadharma*)" A great deal of the confusion over the *Gītā* derives from ignorance of reality, of the actual practices of large social groups; and from taking brāhmaṇa documents as representative of all Indian society.

[4] The standard reference work is F. E. Pargiter's *The Purāṇa Text of the Dynasties of the Kali age* (Oxford, 1913). Some of the theories have been contested e.g. A. B. Keith's review in the *JRAS*, but the work has survived and gained a well-deserved reputation for its synoptic edition of the historical kernel in the major purāṇas.

[5] Translated in S. Beal, *Buddhist Records of the Western World* (London 1884, I, 184-186). The equivalent of *G*. 2 37 does occur on p. 185, and the association with a great battle at *Dharmakṣetra*, where bones still whitened the earth, is explicit, in an otherwise garbled account.

[6] V. S Sukthankar, *The Nala episode and the Rāmāyaṇa* in *Festschrift* F. W. Thomas, pp. 294-303, especially p. 302, where he concludes that the two versions bracket the extant *Rāmāyaṇa*. The paper is reprinted in his Memorial edition (Poona 1944), pp. 406-415. For the mechanism of inflation, see his *Epic Studies, VI*; and my notes on the *Parvasaṃgraha*, in the *JAOS*. 69.110-117; for the *Bhīṣmaparvan* and the 745 stanzas of the *Gīta*, ibid. 71. 21-25

[7] J. Brough, *The Early Brahmanical System of Gotra and Pravara* (Cambridge, 1953), p. 27, notes that the *kevala Āṅgirasas* are completely omitted by Hiraṇyakeśi-Satyāṣāḍha, but takes this to be a casual lacuna. So great an omission is highly improbable. My review in *JAOS*, 73 202-208 was mistaken for a polemic, when the point being made was that theoretical works on *gotra* need to be checked by independent observation. For example, the *segrava* (=śaigrava) *gotra* found in Brāhmī inscriptions at Mathura is not known to the books. Even more striking are the

innumerable local brāhmaṇa groups whose conforming to theory has never been tested. City people in Maharashtra take brāhmaṇas to be primarily of the Sārasvat, Citpāvan, Deśastha and Karhāḍā groups. The 1941 *Census* caste tables for Bombay province as published show that such categories are tegether outnumbered by the 'Other Brahmanas', and that local brāhmaṇa groups are the rule, though the books and theory are in the hands of the major groups named. The Bhṛgus are specially connected with the *Mahābhārata* inflation, as was shown by V. S. Sukhankar in his magnificent *Epic Studies, VI* (ABORI, 18 1-76; *Memorial Edition* 1 278-337). It is important to note that the Bhārgava inflation was independent of though not hostile to the Nārāyaṇīya, inflation, which continued after the first had tapered off. So much so, that the famous benedictory stanza *Nārāyaṇa namaskṛtyam* of the popular editions drops out of the critical text, but most of the properly Bhārgava inflations (e g. needless emphasis upon Paraśurāma) all remain. In *G.* 10.25, the Lord reveals himself as Bhṛgu among the great sages (*maharṣīṇām Bhṛgur aham*), though that sage occupies no position in Vedic tradition, and a trifling one even later.

[8] *EI*, viii, 36 ff

[9] Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita* and *Saundarananda* still exist, not to speak of *subhāṣita* verses scattered through anthologies in his name. The fragments of a play *Śāriputra-prakaraṇa* were arranged in order by H. Lüders, from Central Asian (Turfan) finds. This or another play of the same name was acted by hired actors in Fa Hsien's time in the Gupta heartland, as were also similar plays on the conversion of Moggallāna and Kassapa; note that all three disciples and Aśvaghoṣa himself were brāhmaṇas.

[10] The *Mahābhārata* diaskeuasts proclaim their desire to include everything. In the *Mahābhārata* 1.1-2 the work is successively an *itihāsa*, a *purāṇa*, an *upaniṣad*, a Veda, and outweighs all four Vedas together. It is the storehouse for poets. *Mahābhārata*,1.56 33 boasts: *yad ihāsti tad anyatra, yan nehāsti na tat kva-cit*: whatever is here might be elsewhere but what was not here could hardly ever be found !

[11] Translated by K. T. Telang, see note 1. There is an *Uttaragītā*, a quite modern apocryphal work.

[12] This is the second *sutta* of the *Dīgha-nikāya*, and has served as the model, in many ways, for the later *Milindpañho*, questions of king Menander.

[13] This was clearly stated by Mr. C. Rajagopalachari in a press interview.

[14] The only published source I have been able to locate for the original cult is the *Satya Pirer Kathā* in Bengali by Rāmeśvara Bhaṭṭācāryya (ed. Srī-Nagendranāth Gupta, Calcutta University, 1930).

[15] This paragraph and the next are treated in greater detail in a paper of mine on the *avatāra* syncretism and possible sources of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, *JBBRAS*, xxiv-xxv (1948-9), 121-134.

[16] *RV.* 8.96·13-14, but sometimes interpreted mystically as part of the Soma legend. The traditional explanation is that this Kṛṣṇa was an

'Asura', i e. non-Aryan, and the fighting against Indra on the banks of the Amśumatī river was real, not symbolic of something else.

[17] Ed. K. de Vreese, Leiden 1936. This particular *nāga* cult had been virtually killed by the Buddhist monks (*Rājataraṅgiṇī*, 1.177-8), while the brāhmaṇas had also been reduced to helplessness at the time of the Buddhist teacher Nāgārjuna. They made a come-back by writing the *Nīlamatapurāṇa* (*Rājataraṅgiṇī*. 1. 182-6), Kalhaṇa informs us in passing.

[18] *ABORI*, 1.59-66; *JRAS*, 1909.1055-6, 1087-92; 1910.813-5, 885-7.

[19] See *JRAS*, 1960; 17-31, 135-144, for the cave painting (originally discovered by Carlleyle) Mrs. B. Allchin in *Man*, 58.1958, article 207+plate *M* (pp. 153-5).

[20] The assurance is unmistakable: "Whenever true belief (*dharma*) pales and unrighteousness flourishes, then do I throw out another offshoot of myself". The next stanza proclaims that the god comes into being from age to age, to protect the good people, destroy the wicked, and to establish *dharma*. It need not be further emphasized that the superfluous incarnation in *Mahābhārata* times wasted a perfectly good *avatāra* badly needed elsewhere.

[21] The cult is coeval with the foundation of Parvatī village, hence older than the Peshwā temple to the goddess who killed that demon. Cf. *Bombay Gazetteer*, 18, pt. 3 (Poona District), p. 388

[22] *Art In The Ice Age* by J. Maringer and H.G. Bandi, after Hugo Obermaier (London 1953); especially figures 30, 31, 70 (with mask, and arms imitating mammoth tusks), 142, 143, and perhaps 166.

[23] This shows in Harṣa's inscriptions (e g. *EI*, vii, 155-60); benedictory verses at the beginning of his Buddhist drama *Nāgānarda*, addressed to Gaurī; Bāṇa's description in the *Harṣacarita* and Hsiuen Chuāng's account (*Beal*, 1. 223; the stūpa vihāra, fine Maheśvara temple and the Sun-temple were all close together near Kanauj, and all constantly thronged with worshippers.

[24] For the iconoclasm of Harṣa of Kaśhmīr, *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, 7.1080-1098. He had predecessors of similar bent though less systematic: Jayāpīḍa in the 8th century (*Rājataraṅgiṇī*, 631-3; 638.9) and Śankaravarman (5.168-70) in 883-902 *A.D*)

[25] The Gupta gold coinage is impressive, but hardly useful for normal transactions. Their silver coinage is notoriously inferior to, say, pre-Mauryan punch-marked coins, and rather rare in hoards; of Harṣa, only one coinage is known, and even that rather doubtful, in silver. The Chinese travellers Fa Hsien and Hsiuen Chuāng are emphatic in the assertion that most of the transactions were barter, and that cowry shells were also used, but very little currency. The accumulation by temples, monasteries and barons did nothing for the circulation of wealth or of commodities.

[26] This is discussed in a paper of mine to appear in the *JESHO*, on feudal trade charters. Yaśodharman of Mālwā uses *sāmanta* as neighbouring ruler, whereas Viṣṇuṣeṇa (a Maitraka king) issued a charter in 592 AD where *sāmanta* can only have the feudal meaning.

[27] The hero-stones carved in bas-relief are to be found in almost any village not recently settled, throughout Maharashtra and the south. A good collection is in the National Defence Academy's Museum at Khadakwasla, near Poona. The death in fending off cattle raiders seems to be symbolized in many cases by a pair of ox-heads in the lowest panels. The story progresses upwards, to the funeral, perhaps with a *satī*, and going to heaven. The top of the relief slab is generally carved in the semblance of a funerary urn, familiar since Buddhist days. For inscriptions, even a single volume (*EC*, X, for example): Kolar 79, feudal grant for family of baron killed in battle (about 890 A.D.); Kolar 226 (*circa* 950 A.D.), grant of a field, on account of the death of a warrior fighting against cattle raiders; Kelar 232 (750 A.D.), Kolar 233 (815 A.D.), Mulbagal 92, 780 A.D. Mulbagal 93, 970 A.D., etc., with the hero-relief in every case.

[28] Less well known than Gāṅga inscriptions are the minor ones showing how widely the custom was spread: *e g.* from *EC*, Goribindnur 73 (*circa* 900 A.D.), the village watchman sacrifices his own head; Cintāmaṇi 31 1050 A.D.), when the Oḍeya of the village went to heaven, his servant had his own head cut off—and a field was dedicated to his memory; oaths of not surviving the lord are taken in Kolar 129 (*circa* 1220 A.D.), Mulbagal 77 (1250 A.D.), Mulbagal 78 etc. Occasionally, a memorial was erected to a particularly able hound, as in Mulbagal 85 (975 A.D.), and Mulbagal 162, though the dog's prowess rather than *bhakti* is praised.

[29] Penguin Classics L 57, *Travels of Marco Polo* (trans. R. E. Latham), pp. 236-8, of the cremation, and ritual suicide in front of some idol, by royal consent.

[30] By 'society' is meant not only the rulers but the ruled. If the śūdra should agree that he ought to starve for imaginary sins committed in some supposed previous birth, either his group will die out, or at best be unable as well as unwilling to fight against invaders. Indian feudal history, however, is full of raids and counter-raids, not only by Muslims. It follows that the expropriated class will not show by its actions that they regard the expropriation as reasonable on religious grounds, particularly when they see the very same religion unable to defend its proponents against armed heretics. My point is simply that the fulfilment of certain material needs is as essential to health of the mind as it is to that of the body. It seems to me that the *Gītā* philosophy, like so much else in India's 'spiritual' heritage, is based in the final analysis upon the inability to satisfy more than the barest material needs of a large number.

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M.G.S. NARAYANAN
and
VELUTHAT KESAVAN

Bhakti Movement in South India

Definitions

The Tamil *bhakti* movement represents primarily a religious phenomenon with a valuable social content—a new wave of Aryan or Hindu influcence among the Tamil people.[1] During its life-span of three and a half centuries, beginning from the middle of sixth century A.D.[2] Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava saints and their followers practised and propagated the cult of *bhakti* in the countryside, and went to pilgrim centres singing and dancing. They received royal patronage, clashed with Jains and Buddhists in open debate and defeated them, presumably healed the sick, and performed other miracles. Their hymns addressed to several deities constitute the cream of Tamil literature. Although the elements of dissent, protest, and reform are clear in the movement, these aspects are subordinated to the overall pattern of a greater movement—the consolidation and extension of classical Hindu society in early medieval India.

The *bhakti* movement in south India, in fact, had a two fold character, i.e., its two main currents of Śaivism and Vaiṣ-

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ṇavism which flowing in parallel ways also mingled occasionally; the Viṣṇava saints being known as *Āḷvārs* and the Śaiva saints, *Nāyanārs*. It is dobutful whether the movement started as a conscious one. It is likely that several *bhaktas* appeared simultaneously in different centres, and the movement developed its conscious identity by the ninth century. By this time, Sundarmurti Nāyanār, the last of the *Nāyanārs*, and Nammāḷvār, one of the last *Āḷvārs*, indicated in their works a comprehensive understanding of the literature in the respective fields.[3] For the first time an awareness of the group identity of saints and temples has been explicitly mentioned and treated in their compositions. This was carried forward by Nāthamuni (10th century) who edited the Tamil Vaiṣṇava canon and Nambi Āṇḍār Nambi (11th century) who was the earliest compiler of the Śaiva hagiology.

How the terms *Nāyanār* and *Āḷvār*, employed by their contemporaries, came to refer to the leaders of the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava movements respectively remains a puzzle. The word *nāyanār* may be Tamilicized form of Saṇskrit *nāyaka*, meaning 'a leader', probably suggestive of the Śaiva belief that the sixty-three leaders were incarnations of the *bhūtagaṇas* of Śiva. The term *āḷvār* has been derived from the root *āḷ* which could imply the act of plunging or immersing oneself and, as such, it has been suggested that the *Āḷvārs* were persons who delved deeply into devotion. The change from *ḷ* to *ḷ* is linguistically admissible, and the term *āḷ* means 'to rule' or 'to preserve'. In that case the Vaiṣṇava saints may be said to have enjoyed in *bhakti* literature the chief attribute of Viṣṇu whose function is preservation and this is quite different from creation or destruction. A third possibility, which we would support, is that *āḷvār* is the literal translation of the Sanskrit word *bhakta*. Since *bhakta* is derived from the root *bhaj*, meaning 'to divide', 'to apportion', *bhakta* literally means one who enjoys a share.[4] Thus, since the term *bhakta* was originally employed to denote a servant or retainer who shared the wealth of his master, in the course of time the same word must have been used for a devotee in view of the *dāsyabhāva* or attitude of service. Perhaps the Tamil word may have this meaning since the root *āḷ* also means 'to possess', 'to enjoy', etc.

Historiography

Until recently, most of what has been written about this twin movement, concerns itself with chronology, the identity of individual saints, and with some literary and philosophical appreciations. Early scholars treated it chiefly as a literary movement or, at best, an ideological phenomenon with religion as the source of inspiration. The very label, 'Bhakti Movement', conferred by modern writers was based on this literary-philosophical conception, because they had no clear notion about either its chronological sequence or the social significance. Historical studies, initiated by scholars like S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, R.G. Bhandarkar, T.A. Gopinatha Rao and K.A. Nilakanta Sastri in the twenties, were able to approximately fix the chronological framework, and with it came the inevitable scholarly disputes about the identity and date of individual saints. Mainly because of the uncertainty of its historical outline, and partly due to the lack of emphasis on social history, the correlation between religio-literary aspects and the socio-political background of the movement was not highlighted. Moreover, it was viewed as a pure Tamil movement and, consequently, never in the larger context of Indian civilization Even today, due to a lack of theoretical perspectives in south Indian historiography, historical works have not yet been able to assess the Tamil *bhakti* movement from an all India viewpoint. Hence, the present study attempts to analyze the movement not only within the larger framework of the development of society and culture in India, but also in its socio-economic context with special reference to the elements of dissent, protest and reform.

Source Materials

Historical evidence for an analytical study are chiefly found in the literary works of the *Nāyanārs* and *Āḻvārs* themselves, which are in the form of devotional songs addressed to deities mostly with reference to particular temples. These works which reflect the elegance of classical Tamil verse became the model for much of Tamil poetry in subsequent periods. The source materials may be classified as follows :

1. Songs of the *Nāyanārs* and Āḷvārs.
2. Later compositions by their followers in the form of chronicles and hagiologies.
3. A few references in contemporary and near-contemporary epigraphs to devotional works and the temples connected with them.[5]
4. A few sculptured panels, painting and images representing the incidents in the lives of these personalities.[6]

Movement in space and time

A study of the *bhakti* movement suggests that it had its origins on the east coast, in and around such famous temples as Tiruppati and Kanhi.[7] Tiruppati, the seat of Tirumāl or Viṣṇu, otherwise known as *Venkaṭam*, is mentioned as the northernmost point of Tamiḻakam in early Tamil Śangam literature.[8] In the Śangam period there was a chief called Pulli at Venkatam, probably a remote ancestor of the Pallavas, who seem to have used a Sanskritized tribal name as their dynastic title.[9] The relationship between Venkatam and the process of Aryanization of Tamiḻakam is significant. The northernmost point of Tamiḻakam was also the point of contact between the Aryan and Tamil ways of life. Since Venkatam, the earliest northernmost centre of Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* cult, appears to be closely associated with the Pallavas, we feel that the *bhakti* movement was a byproduct of the Aryanizing or Sanskritizing influence. The same point is underlined by the relative precedence and importance of Kanhi, the later capital of the Pallava kingdom. It is well known that the Pallavas were one of the early Dravidian dynasties which were thoroughly Aryanized. For instance, by the close of the third century A.D. to the middle of the sixth century, Pallava rulers of the Prakrit and Sanskrit charters acted as the protagonists of Aryanization in the Far South. They adopted the same role as the Sātavāhanas of the Deccan. The new Pallava line of Simhaviṣṇu, established in the second half of the sixth century, continued the patronage of brāhmaṇas and brāhmaṇical culture on a much larger scale than before.[10]

Following the first phase of the movement in the late sixth and the early seventh century under the patronage of the

Pallavas, we find other temples like Tillai or Chidambaram further south and Tirunallur, Tiruvarur and Śrirangam to the south-west in the interior acquiring prominence. These were located in the traditional Coḷa territory.[11] The *raison d'etre* of this rapid and smooth extension is brought out by the fact that the Coḷas were feudatories of the Pallavas.[12] Subsequently, the movement spread further south from the Pallava-Coḷa territories to that of the Pāṇḍyas during the eighth century where temples in Madurai, Tirunelveli, Kumbakonam, etc. became active centres.[13] It is only during the final phase in the ninth century that the movement took roots in Malaināḍu or Kerala on the west coast and temples like *Tiruvanjaikkaḷam Tirunāvāy*, *Tirukkatkarai*, *Tirumūḷikkaḷam*, etc., became the chief centres of devotion.[14]

The spread of the movement created active cultural links among the various people, by cutting across the political boundaries of different kingdoms. It promoted a new Tamil consciousness which has significantly contributed to the Tamil heritage. In castewise distribution, we find some *Āḷvārs* like Tondaraḍippoḍi, Madhurakavi, Namāḷvār and Periyāḷvār hailing from the brāhmaṇa community while Kulaśekhara was a kṣatriya and the other *Aḷvārs* belonged to *kaḷḷar* (Tirumangai), and even *pāṇā* (Tiruppāṇā) communities of the śūdra caste. A similar composition of different castes may also be found among the *Nāyanārs*.

By the end of the ninth century, the *bhakti* movement had traversed the full range of Tamiḷakam and conquered the three major kingdoms—Coḷa, Pāṇḍya and Cera. By this time, the lists of the *Nāyanārs* and *Āḷvārs* were completed and the first edited volumes of the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava canons were prepared for use in temples.[15] By the tenth century the movement had already come into fruition, realizing its early social objectives. But as it became a part of the established religion and culture, it began losing its original character of dissent, protest, and reform.

Parallel and Related Developments

There being a close interrelationship between religious activity and socio-political and economic trends, the *bhakti* movement cannot be understood in isolation. At that time in south India there were several significant, parallel and interrelated developments taking place. These may be enumerated here.

1. The growth and consolidation of new brāhmaṇa-backed feudal monarchies first under the Pallavas, and then under the Pāṇḍyas, Ceras and Coḷas of the post-Śaṅgam period.
2. The flowering of the early temple movement, especially the rock-cut and structural temples of Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava deities. The temple complex included vast landed property, that was administered by brāhmaṇa trustees who lived in settlements organized around the temples, where most of the tenants were non-brāhmaṇas.
3. The emergence of prosperous guilds of traders and artisans in several district headquarters and in the semi-autonomous brāhmaṇa settlements.
4. The eruption of acrimonious Brāhmaṇa-Buddhist-Jain disputes which came to a close with the establishment of the brāhmaṇa supremacy and the triumph of Hindu religion; this relegated the non-Vedic creeds to the background.
5. The establishment of an all-embracing caste system which attracted all the original clans and tribes of south India. These were then placed in a feudal hierarchical order in which the brāhmaṇa was the point of reference for fixing ritual and social status.

The above developments indicate that in south India these three and a half centuries constituted a formative period of society. But an understanding of the processes involved in this formation in which the movement played a crucial role requires the interlinking of diverse phenomena and factors. But not all the data is easily available, especially that of the guilds. However, indirect clues for one field are often revealed from another to provide us with an overall pattern of mutual relationships. To illustrate, leading personalities of this period played diverse roles in more than one sphere of action; King Mahendravarman I (580-630 A.D.) of Kanchi, the founder of Pallava greatness, was the patron-disciple of Appar, one of the early saint-preachers of Śaivism.[16] By birth a Jain, he became a severe critic of Jain-Buddhist monasticism in the period of his post-conversion proselytizing zeal as reflected in the Śaiva literature. He was also the author of a Sanskrit burlesque called *Mattavilāsa*.[17] In addition he was distinguished pioneer in building temples, with large endowments.[18] Although not to the same extent, a multiplicity of roles may also be observed in the case of the Pāṇḍyan king Varaguṇa I (765-815 A.D.) of Madurai[19] and the Cera king Kulaśekhara (844-883 A.D.) of Mākotai.[30] Both of them laid the foundations of their great dynasties, and promoted the *bhakti* movement in their respective kingdoms. They also built and endowed a large number of brāhmaṇical temples. That the Cera king Kulaśekhara took direct interest in fostering the trade guilds, called *Anjuvaṇṇam* and *Maṇigrāmam*, is endorsed by inscriptional evidence.[31]

Evolution of *bhakti* in the North

Historically, we may suggest that the ideas and institutions which flourished in the more advanced civilizations of the Gangetic valley, as represented in the Gupta empire, were gradually spreading to the South. It is interesting to note that the emergence of a feudalized monarchy with graded systems of *sāmantas* or feudatories, chartered brāhmaṇa settlements and trade corporations, temples of Śiva and Visṇu, the hierarchical order of caste and a spate of devotional literature centred on personified gods, was characterized not only during the Gupta period of the North, but also during the Cāḷukya period in the Deccan and the Pallava-Pāṇḍya-Cera Coḷa period in the Far South. Therefore, it is surprising that a *bhakti* movement was not clearly identified in the Hindu revival of the North under the patronage of the Guptas, variously called 'Hindu Renaissance' or efflorescence, 'Classical Period' of Hindu art and literature, etc. Nevertheless, scanning through the Sanskrit literature of that period, with the redacted Purāṇas dedicated to particular deities like Viṣṇu, Śiva, etc., and the standardized text of the *Mahābhārata* with the *Bhagavad-Gītā* as its epitome, one gets the impression that *bhakti* as a distinctive movement had indeed manifested itself there. It must have probably originated in the post-Mauryan period, as exemplified by the famous Heliodorus pillar inscription of Vidiśā, recently identified as part of a temple complex.[22] The great cult-centres which developed at such pilgrimage places like Mathura and Varanasi must have given birth to the institution of the temple, an institution that was destined to be the carrier and the rallying point of the cult of devotion. The *bhāgavata* movement with its *āgamic* form of worship appears to have reached a climax in the Gupta period, with emperors claiming titles like *parameśvara*, *bhaṭṭāraka*, *paramabhāgavata*, etc., is suggestive of their attachment to the cult of devotion.[23]

In the North, brāhmaṇa intellectual monopolists had already accepted the path of philosophical awareness or *jñānamārga* almost exclusively for themselves. This they did while chalking out two alternative paths; one of unquestioning *dharma*-based activity or *karmamārga*, and the other of blind faith and surrender or *bhaktimārga*. The path of *karma* according to one's *dharma* was generally ordained for all of the castes. The path of *bhakti* representing a sublimation of the spirit of slavery or *dāsyabhāva* was, paradoxically enough, especially meant for the exceptional souls in all groups who sought liberation from social restrictions. It was congenial to the psychology of the lowlier groups in a caste-oriented social structure. This vulgarized picture of the three paths, justified by providing a philosophical outlook to the caste order with safety valves, has been most succinctly enshrined in the compromise formula contained in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*.[24] If theoretically the three paths were equal, the path of *bhakti* was considered crude, simple and comparatively easy to follow. It was thought to be well suited to the thousands of uneducated and undeveloped people who were condemned to take up menial work but also required an aspiration for some form of escape.

The purāṇic ideology of *bhakti* appears to have percolated to the South through the temple-centred brāhmaṇa settlements where the study of sacred and quasi-sacred literature was taken up as a religious duty by large numbers of priests. This process of study was institutionalized in the post of the *Mahābhārata Bhaṭṭa* created in the temples for the purpose of expounding the *Mahābhārata* and popularizing it among the common people.[25] The development in the South of a Sanskrit theatre fostered the caste of *Cākkaiyars*. They specialized in transmitting the message of purāṇic literature through a particular form of dance-drama.[26] Again, the purāṇic myths and legends were portrayed in sculpture and painting and all of the fine arts were employed to make the system of Hindu beliefs palatable to the common people. The way in which Brāhmaṇism was transformed into Hinduism through temple-centred *bhakti* in the North seems to have been repeated in the South.

Translation to the Tamil Idiom

These processes imply that there was the mutation of Aryan-brāhmaṇa ideology in the course of its translation into the Tamil idiom, and thereby its popularization among the Tamil people. It took roots in the Tamil soil by creating its own mythology and legends. For instance, there are several legends about Tirunāvukkarasu (literally, Master of the Tongue) better known as Appar (a term of respect signifying literally 'father'). To start with, he was a Jain Veḷḷāḷa from Tirunumur village. A miraculous cure through the intervention of his sister who was a devotee of Śiva converted him to Śaivism. The Jains complained to their patron, King Mahendravarman Pallava, who then persecuted him severely. The punishments included throwing him into a kiln, administering poison, placing him in the path of a murderous elephant and pushing him into the rough sea with a heavy stone tied to his neck. He escaped miraculously, whereupon the king surrendered, embraced Śaivism, pulled down the Jain monastery and built a Śiva temple in its place. Appar is also credited with curing the sick many times and bringing back to life a boy who died of snake bite. Another story about him says that he sang open the closed doors of the temple of *Tirumaraikaadu* (*Vedāraṇya*) with the magic of his devotion. This may be symbolic of the opening of the Vedic lore by means of the key of *bhakti* and throwing it open to the common people. This is significant because Appar openly proclaimed that caste and class were nothing to him and that he was prepared to worship even an outcaste and a leper because God dwells in them.

Sambandhar, a brāhmaṇa from Kauṇḍinya *gotra* from Śiyāli, is represented as a divine child whose disputation with the Jains converted the Pāṇḍya king to Śaivism. He described Lord Śiva as being both Aryan and Tamil; and is said to have drunk the milk of Pārvatī at the age of three, received a pair of divine cymbals and all the royal paraphernalia, later, on route to Tiruvaratturai. Then, a divine canopy descended from the heavens to protect him from the sun. He is said to have wrought the largest number of miracles.

In the case of Sundarar, who claimed to be a friend of Śiva, the latter himself is said to have mediated his marriage proposal twice. Śiva played the role of a messenger of love at Tiruvarur, his birthplace. When Kalikkāma Nāyanār, another devotee, protested against Sundarar for having dared to employ Śiva in this manner, there was another intervention by Śiva. In the end Sundarar is believed to have disappeared from the temple of Śiva at Tiruvañcaikkaḷam in a mysterious manner. The Śaivas interpret this event as his ascent to Kailāśa on the back of a white elephant sent by Śiva. On hearing this report, his friend and master Ceramān Perumāl Nāyanār is also stated to have proceeded to Kailāśa on the back of a horse.

Similar stories are woven around the names of the Mudal *Āḷvārs* or Early *Āḷvārs*—Poygai, Pūdam and Pay who are stated to have come out of flowers in a tank, a creeper and a well respectively. There is also the legend of all the three of them casually getting together in the dark corridor of a house and being joined by Viṣṇu himself as the fourth in the company.[27] Again, Tiruppāṇa Āḷvār, the member of a low caste of wandering minstrels playing on the *yāḷ* went about singing the praise of Viṣṇu. His devotion was conveyed to the temple priest in a dream by Viṣṇu himself who ordered the priest to carry the Āḷvār to the temple on his shoulders.[28] Or, Ānḍāḷ, the only woman among the *Āḷvārs*, chose Kriṣṇa Ranganātha himself as her bridegroom. Since her love was so intense Ranganātha called her into the shrine where she disappeared.[29]

Literary Style

Thus, it is through such myths and legends, charged with emotion and drama, that the personalities and places in Tamiḷakam were sanctified. The cosmic forms of Viṣṇu and Śiva became humanized and localized, playing the roles of companion, child, bridegroom, and mother, etc. In this way they endeared themselves to hundreds of devotees around the chief centres of worship. There were new stories of short term *avatāras* of Viṣṇu and Śiva who help their devotees in times of crisis. These deities were endowed with a local habitation and a name in temples. Each important temple was associated with the lives of the saints in some way or other; but temples and saints gained popularity and respectability by this mutual relationship. Stories of local miracles and tales connecting mythical heroes with historical sites were fused into the accounts of temples, thus giving rise to a new genre of literature, the *sthalapurāṇa*.

The saints, both *Nāyanārs* and *Āḷvars*, popularized their creeds not only with the help of miracles, myths and legends but also with that of innovations in literary style. They used new forms of poetry like *antādi* (a poem in which the last word-syllable recurs as the first in the next), *iraṭṭaimanimālai* (a poem using two different metres alternatively), *mummaṇikkovai* (a schematic poem of ten groups of three stanzas, each in a different metre), *ulā* (a song of victory), *pallānḍu* (a song in the form of a ritual to remove the evil eye), *tarattu* (lullaby), etc. They were also responsible for reviving old metres and forms employed in the Śangam literature. Combined with simple and forceful diction, romantic imagery and the music of words, this new literature captured the imagination of the people on a large scale. Incidentally, so much has been written about this literary aspect of the movement that the social content and institutional background has been generally lost sight of.

Bhakti and the New Monarchy

It is significant that the growth of the *bhakti* movement took place at the time of the rise of the new feudal monarchy in south India. In the stories about the early *Nāyanārs* we find that the royal patronage given to Jainism is now being converted to Hinduism, especially in the Pallava and Pāṇḍya kingdoms. What this suggests is that at the level of the ordinary people the Hindu movement had to contend with the already established Jainism. But with the growing strength of Śaivism kings turned away from these heretical creeds. This illustrates the processes whereby popular creeds won over the rulers—a repetition of the history of the Roman empire and the Mauryan empire though on a much smaller scale.

Royal patronage seems to have intensified the tempo of the *bhakti* movement. Mahendravarman is alleged to have destroyed a Jain monastery and built a Hindu temple in its place. These seem to have followed a temple building spree which spread from the Pallava-Coḷa territory to the Pāṇḍya and finally the Cera territories. These are the areas where the *bhakti* movement also spread. Hundreds of inscriptions from the seventh to the tenth century bear testimony to this brisk activity of temple construction.[30] Which naturally could not have been possible without the active support of kings. In turn, those kings and chieftains who supported brāhmaṇical groups became more powerful than those who opposed them.

Consequently, Brāhmaṇism with its institutional base in the temple centred agrarian settlements had emerged as the most dynamic progressive force. For example, forests were cleared, and fertile river valleys developed. A communication system linking the courts and marts of south India with other parts of India also came into being. Brāhmaṇa leaders had succeeded in organizing the indigenous people as tenants and temple servants, grading them into castes and subcastes with infinite variations of economic and ritul status. They were in a position to mobilize the manpower of the vast tenant class for royal military service. The kings and the brāhmaṇas patronized each other.

In time, being a member of the movement of *bhakti* gave a passport for entry into the enchanted world. This was true for kings, merchants or ordinary peoples, on all of whom it could confer a special brāhmaṇa status through proximity to gods and "gods of the earth". It served as a popular sacrament of initiation. The status of a person arose in proportion to his readiness to submit to the brāhmaṇa oligarchy. What became the hallmark of greatness in an age of growing brāhmaṇical power, was the surrender of pride in the self and the voluntary acceptance of the position of "the servant of the servant of the servant of the Lord," as Kulaśekhara Āḻvār and Tondaradippodi had proclaimed. In this way, if kings derived greater socio-political power, brāhmaṇas themselves acquired not only better protection but popularity through this alliance.

To give the benefit of doubt, even though this materialist calculation might not have been a conscious one on both the sides, the mechanism of social power worked in promoting simultaneously the power of Hindu kings and the prosperity of brāhmaṇa settlements.

The ideology of *bhakti* served as the cementing force bringing together kings, brāhmaṇa priests and the common people in a harmonious manner. The intoxication of *bhakti* could enable the high to forget their pride and the low their misery. This provided an illusion of equality while retaining the stubborn walls of inequality in the feudal system of production and distribution. In short, the *bhakti* movement contained all the ingredients of the popular form of Hinduism; the ancient classical brāhmaṇical creed of the Vedas and the śāstras acculturated with the non-brāhmaṇa and non·Aryan population of south India.

Some kings and chieftains like Mahendravarman and other unidentified Pallavas and Coḷas, like Kaḷarcingam, Cengatcoḷa and Anapāya, and even a chieftain of Venāḍu called Veṇāṭṭadigaḷ are among the patrons of the movement besides the two Cera kings of Kerala. However, the earliest saints did not come from the ranks of royalty. This may be explained by the fact that when the *bhokti* movement had become popular, the kings also patronized it both for making use of it and for the sake of enhancing their own prestige and power. Mahendravarman's destruction of a Jain monastery and Neḍumāran's alleged impalement of several thousand Jains under the influence of the movement indicates clearly that some of the early *Nāyanārs* had at least influenced the rulers in order to use state power for the promotion of their creed even through the use of violence. With the changing order of society this may have helped the rulers to consolidate the power of monarchy as an institution.

Projection of the temple cult

If the *bhakti* movement is viewed beyond the abstract spiritual ideas of the culture heroes as has been done until recently, and examined at the functional level, we are bound to take a close look at the relation between the saints and the temples. Significantly, because most saints came from the precincts of, or got affiliated to, great brāhmaṇical temples like those at Venkatam, Kanchi, Srirangam, Chidamabaram, Kumbakoṇam, etc.,[31] it is implied that elements of temple propaganda and brāhmaṇical missionary enthusiasm were inseparable components of the movement. *Bhakti* not only started from the temple, but it connected one temple with another through pilgrimages; and in turn this led to the proliferation of temples. Further analysis indicates that these temples owning large estates as *devasvam* and *brahmasvam* property with brāhmaṇas as their trustees, inspired the movement. In other words, Aryan brāhmaṇa pockets in the midst of the Tamil population were already well established under royal patronage with the temple as the nucleus for the dissemination of culture, which appeared long before the arrival of the *Āḷvārs* and *Nāyanārs* on the social scene.

It is plausible to assume that the movement originated on the fringes of brāhmaṇa settlements as an unpremeditated byproduct of the temple; it was partly the fulfilment of their mission and partly an antithesis in the form of non-brāhmaṇa reaction. In this way there was an interaction between the brāhmaṇas and the non-brāhmaṇas; the latter were generally hereditary temple servants, tenants, guards or soldiers and lay worshippers, all constituting the Aryanized section of society. This represents the second stage in the process of Aryanization, i.e., the socialization or brāhmaṇical ideology.

As noted earlier, the literature of the *bhakti* movement is mostly centred on the temples and many details are available. For example, the chief advocates of the Vaiṣṇava movement were the devotees of the main Viṣṇu temples such as Venkatam, Kanchi, Srirangam, Tiruvittuvakkod, Tirumulikkaḷam, etc. Similarly, the chief Śaiva devotees were specially attached to Chidambaram, Tiruvarur, Tiruvancaikkaḷam, etc. Moreover, devotees often undertook a tour of all the important centres of pilgrimage in south India, by dancing and singing with large groups of followers across fields and forests. This programme must have created a big stir in the countryside. The *Periycpurāṇam* gives accounts of how joint pilgrimages were undertaken by Appar and Sambandhar in the early phase and Ceramān Perumāḷ Nāyanār and Sundara in the later phase.[32]

Kulaśekhara Āḷvār and Nammāḷvār also undertook such grand pilgrimages in their time.

Besides the processions and pilgrimages, the institution of temple festivals may be cited as a by-product of the *bhakti* movement, as it linked the temple cult with the movement. For instance, the asterism of Śrāvaṇa in the month of *Śrāvaṇa* was considered to be the birthday of Vāmana, an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. This day came to be celebrated in Tiruppati, Tirukkatkarai and Tiruvallaval, three of the *divyadeśams* of the *Āḷvārs*. A late Śangam work called *Maduraikkānci* sings praises about this *Śrāvana* or *Oṇam* festival. Among the *Āḷvārs*, Periyālvār has composed two exquisite hymns on this festival. Perhaps it was during the reign of Kulaśekhara Āḷvār in Kerala (9th century) that the *Oṇam* festival was introduced. Inscriptions of the tenth century from Tiruvalla and Tirukkatkarai demonstrate the popularity of the festival.[33] In the course of time this Vaiṣṇava sectarian festival was transformed through royal and brāhmaṇical patronage into the national festival of Kerala. This is an important instance where the interests of the temple cult and the *bhakti* movement coincided in the establishment of a popular festival, and it is reflected in literature. Similar festivals, observed in particular temples or in a general way, had a major share in reforming the sectarian creed of Brāhmaṇism and developing it into the popular Hindu religion.

A specific consequence of the movement was the encouragement it gave to *devadāsīs* or handmaids of gods, *tevadiccis* in Tamil. As *bhakti* spread through the media of songs, dance, and beauty, *devadāsīs* played a significant role in the popular appeal of the temple. Thus, Sundaramūrtti Nāyanār was involved with a *devadāsī*.[34] Ceramān Perumāl Nāyanār notes the reception given to Śiva by *devadāsīs* of all ages while he went out in procession around the streets in Kailāśa,[35] and Āṇḍāḷ was herself a *devadāsī* who lived and died in the Śrirangam temple.[36] There is a tradition that Kulaśekhara Āḷvār's daughter, Nīlā, was presented to Śrirangam temple as a *devadāsī*. She is called Cerakuḷa Nācciyār, and a shrine dedicated to her is found in this temple.

The numerous *Nāyanārs* and *Āḷvārs*, together with their secular and spiritual patrons in the courts and temples, constituted only the elites of the *bhakti* movement. There were a large number of devotees who formed the retinue of each distinguished devotee. All of these people, no longer involved in any form of productive labour, had to be fed, clothed, and so on. Therefore, when they moved from temple to temple in a cross-country religious campaign they received food and support all along their route. This would not have been possible but for the sympathy and serviceability of a large class of temple servants and tenants not only in the major centres but even in a network of temples in the countryside. It is these people swelling the ranks of *bhaktas* (because they considered themselves blessed by the opportunity for casual contact and service and still remained anonymous) who provided strong popular base for the movement. This is an important factor that has to be noted because it explains the force and validity of the cult of *bhakti* and its social relevance.

Bhakti and the Guilds

In spite of the fact that guilds of traders like *Vaḷanjiyar*, *Nānādesikaḷ*, *Anjuvaṇṇam* and *Maṇigrāman* flourished in Tamiḻakam during this period, merchants and artisans are conspicuous by their absence in playing any prominent role in the movement. Occasionally we come across an oil merchant like Kaliya Nāyanār of Tiruvoṛṛiyūr who served the Lord with oil lamps,[37] a fisherman like Ādipata Nāyanār of Nagapattinam who consecrated all his catch to the Lord and starved himself,[38] a few general merchants like Iyarpakai of Pumpukar,[39] Amaranidhi of Tirunallur,[40] and Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār, the daughter of the Dhanadatta of Kāraikkāl.[41] But these persons have not been considered among the most important of the *bhaktas*. Perhaps one reason for this is that during the period the *bhakti* movement took roots among the rural agrarian settlements the influence of heretical sects like Jainism and Buddhism continued to be strong in the centres of trade. Prior to the ninth century, this kind of polarization is also apparent from such Jain literary works as *Cilappadikāram*, *Maṇimekalai*, *Jīvakacintāmani*, etc. The conflict between the heretical sects and the neo-Hindu cult of *bhakti* is clearly discernible in the literature. It is not improbable that, at least partly, this reflects the implicit rivalry between the trading classes and the land owning classes.

for socio-political dominance. Explicitly, there was no confrontation of religious creeds but one cannot ignore the agrarian-feudal bias of the *bhakti* movement as well as the trading class bias of Jainism and Buddhism.

Rivalry with Jainism and Buddhism

In the hands of converted monarchs the movement fulfilled the historical function of promoting Hindu revivalism with the aim of checking the spread of Jainism and Buddhism. In order to command public support, this neo-Hindu movement had to outdo the Jain-Buddhist rivals both in terms of mass appeal and by providing such incentives which were stronger than any rational codes of conduct. Against this background, it is easier to understand how and why the movement adopted the media of song and dance to invoke popular enthusiasm. It even assumed a relatively egalitarian and democratic approach, unfamiliar to the rigidity of classical brāhmaṇa discipline. Thus, it may be seen that the Jain-Buddhist challenge which had extended to south India, produced this new form of Hindu response.[42]

The success of the *bhakti* movement signified the victory of Hinduism against the non-Vedic creeds of Jainism and Buddhism. The story of Tirunāvukkarasu or Appar who was a Jain converted to Śaivism and who was instrumental in the conversion of Mahendravarman has been narrated earlier. About Tirujñānasambandhar, it has been stated that on the invitation of the queen Mangaiyarkkarasi, he proceeded to Madurai, the Pāṇḍyan capital, in order to undertake the historic mission of saving the city from the clutches of Jainism. He had to undergo a series of trials and he performed a number of miracles. With the assistance of the minister, Kulaicirai Nāyanār, he eventually succeeded in winning over the king Nedumāran to the Śaiva fold. The occasion of the king's conversion was celebrated by the impalement of 8000 Jains, and the story goes that a temple festival at Madurai commemorates this event to this day. Leaving a possible margin for exaggeration, we do have to take into account the grim reality of Jain-Śaiva conflict which engendered such intolerance on both sides. All the four characters involved, namely, the saint, the queen, the minister, and the king, are eulogised as devotees and included in the list of the sixty-three Nāyanārs. Tirujñānsambandhar dedicates a hymn to the minister in which the whole story is recited. All this evidence suggests that importance was attached to this conflict with Jainism, as seen in the *bhakti* literature.

Parallel stories of such conflicts are found in the case of Vaiṣṇava saints also. Tirumangai, one of the most celebrated of the Ālvārs is said to have stolen a golden image of Buddha from a monastery in Nagapattinam; to pay for renovating the temple at Srirangam. His hymns, full of good poetry, are equally full of venom against Jainism and Buddhism. Periyāḷvār, a brāhmaṇa saint, is stated to have won a religious dispute in the court of Śrīmara Śrīvallabha. The intolerance of Tondaradippodi Āḷvār, another brāhmaṇa saint from Tanjore, towards Jainism and Buddhism was nearly as strong as that of Tirumangai. However, by the middle of the ninth century, when the movement achieved maturity and stabilized its position, this element of rivalry with Jainism and Buddhism had disappeared from the scene. Evidently, the non-Vedic sects had lost the battle in south India, as they had already lost it elsewhere. The hymns of the *Nāyanārs* and *Āḷvārs* of the later period are clear streams of devotion unsullied by the muddy waters of controvery.

By now the saints were no longer anxious to win over new section of people. The earlier spirit of generosity and cosmopolitanism which invited or tolerated *bhaktas* from the lowest ranks like Tiruppāṇa Āḷvār (*Pāṇa*), Nantanār (*Paraiya*) Viranminda Nāyanār (Veḷḷāla), Tirumangai Ālvār (Kaḷḷar), etc. gives way to a new sense of discipline. The whole movement appears to have closed its ranks and consolidated its position after its victory over the non-Vedic sects. There is a new emphasis on the attitude of subservience to brāhmaṇas and temples in the hymns of Kulaśekhara Ālvār and Nammālvār among the Vaiṣṇavas and Ceramān Perumāḷ Nāyanār and Sundaramūrti Nāyanār among the Śaivas. To quote one instance, Sundaramūrti opens his *Tiruttondattogai* claiming himself to be the "slave of the slaves of the brāhmaṇas of Tillai."[43] Instances may be multiplied by quoting extracts from the devotees of the later period. Thus the first phase of castelessness, which has sometimes been interpreted by scholars as a protest against the caste system, is followed by a second phase of conformity to caste rules.

Thus, it may he inferred that the tendency towards reform inherent in the neglect of caste rules had been at least partly necessitated by the strength of heretical sects like Jainism and Buddhism which refused to recognize these barriers. In this period of its conflict with the heretical creeds, brāhmaṇical Hinduism apparently borrowed the tenets of its adversaries. But it was a very shrotlived phenomenon, a moment of aberration or lapse from which Hindu society recovered as soon as the point of danger had passed.

Reflection and legitimization of the feudal order

This victory of Hinduism in south India, spearheaded by the *bhakti* movement registered and firmly established the agrarian feudal order supported by a graded system of hierarchy in caste. In many ways the new jargon of *bhakti* literature is suggestive of the new feudal class relationships and the corresponding ideology. For instance, if the deity in the temple, which is the central concept, is equated with the king, then a parallel world of authority is also reconstructed on the spiritual plane. Similar words like *ko* and *perumāl* are employed to denote the deity and the king; the term *koyil* is used to denote both the temple and the palace, and the ritual of worship is conceived on the same pattern as the ritual of service to the king. Ceramān Perumāḷ Nāyanār's *Ādiyula* or *Tirukkayilayanana Ulā* brings out in vivid form the daily routine of worship in the temple followed by the deity's procession through the streets around the temple.[44] The same procedure may be traced in the epigraphic records of the age. For example in the Tiruvalla copper plates;[45] the god is awakened with music and dance (*rājopacāra*), bathed (*snānapāna nīrattupaḷḷi*), dressed and fed and taken in procession (*pavani* or *nagarapradakṣiṇa*). While every day is a festive day in the temple, there are special feasts and celebrations to mark the birth asterism of the deity, or other auspicious occasions. Then, the image of the deity has a *nukuta* like the king, and payment to the temple is mentioned as *iṛai* (tax) add *tiṛai* (tribute). Like a palace the temple is also constructed with *maṇḍapas* (halls) and *prasādas* (mansions) surrounded by *prakāras* (fortress walls) and guarded by *dvārapālas* (gate keepers). The chief deity of the temple is accompanied by his consort and his relatives and served by a whole army of musicians, dancing girls, story tellers, actors, garland makers and priests-in-attendance.

It is this elaborate parallelism between the deity and the king that was to authenticate and legitimize the new monarchy in the different regions of the peninsula. However, although the terms employed pertain to royalty, yet the connotation is not exactly royal but feudal. This happens because the same terminology was used for king and lord in feudal society in spite of the difference in status. The plurality and co-existence of different deities, each deity occupying the position of the lord for his devotee, was as much recognized in the *bhakti* movement as the plurality and co-existence of the lords; each lord singularly commanding loyalty from his immediate vassal.

Society in south India may thus be represented by the typical feudal pyramid, i.e., the king at the apex, great landlords, big tenants, magnates, priests, merchants, princes, etc. forming the middle portion, and the small tenants, serfs and slaves constituting the base. The governing principle in this order was the feudal contract, explicit or implicit in the relationship of castes, and the cementing force was supplied by the spirit of loyalty in service. The complete surrender of individual initiative formed the credo, which had to be followed by the majority of the people. There is a surprising resemblance between the lord-serf relationship at the core of feudal society and the deity-devotee relationship idealized and celebrated in *bhakti* literature. As noted earlier, interestingly, Sanskrit words like *bhakta, bhakti, bhagavān*, etc. have originally been derived from the root *bhaj*—'to share', 'to apportion', etc. Gradually, the term *bhakta* came to denote the servant who shared the wealth of his master in return for his personal service.[46] While this was the case in the North, the terms used in the South are also directly borrowed from the terminology of the feudal social structure. The devotee habitually addresses the deity as *uḍaiyār, tambirān*, etc.—all meaning 'lord' or 'master' and describes his own position as that of *adiyān*, meaning 'slave.' Thus, a king of permanent, unquestioning unconditional obedience towards the master forms the badge of the devotee. A large number of songs composed by the *Nāyanārs* and *Āḷvars* praise this bondage as the highest desirable objective in life, in contrast to wealth, and even deliverance.[47]

It is in this manner that the *bhakti* literature created an aura of sentimental romance around the feudal institutions of the age. Both slavery and serfdom in India were sublimated by this equation with the divine order, not only through the intellectual appeal of *karma* and *punarjanma* theories but also through the emotional appeal of the *bhakti* doctrine. Suffering was sweetened by voluntary acceptance of it and by exalting it to the level of sacrifice. The intoxication of *bhakti* gave the lowliest of the low a chance of escape or at least a chance of pride in the exalted fellow-members of the community. This conferred on the entire community of the *paraiyas* the dignity of Nantanār, and the entire community of *pāṇas* the dignity of Tiruppāṇa Ālvār. It was an indirect form of acceptance into the fold of Hinduism for the lower castes and tribes though, strictly speaking, only the brāhmaṇas had the ritualistic right to be religious in the full sense. Sentiment replacing ritual, this extension of membership had a double effect; one, of closing the ranks of Hinduism against the non-Vedic creeds of Jainism and Buddhism and two, to some extent, bringing outsiders within the sphere of an Aryanized society. Nevertheless, the brāhmaṇa remained the brāhmaṇa, and the *pāṇa* or *paraiya* remained the *pāṇa* or *paraiya*. The communities never mingled, though exceptional individuals from both the sides crossed the boundary with immunity, as in the well known stories of Tiruppāṇa Ālvār Nantanār, etc. In short, an inclusive outer circle was drawn around the Hindu community, in which every member had a common right to participate in the cult of devotion or *bhakti*.

Dissent, protest and reform

The *bhakti* movement, though a product of the temple and a causative factor behind its proliferation, had deviated a good deal from the orthodox philosophy of brāhmaṇical Hinduism. This was an age of vigorous intellectual activity at both secular and spiritual levels. For example, Mahendravarman of Kanchi, (beginning of the seventh century) who was a patron of the movement incisively delves in his *Mattavilāsa-*

prahasana into the decay of the established religions, both Buddhist and Hindu, and, makes fun of the extreme forms of asceticism. The court of Kanchi patronized Daṇḍin, the many-sided genius, and, probably in the beginning of the ninth century, the great Śaṅkarācārya who propounded the highly intellectual philosophy of Advaita and, more important for our theme, also synthesized the different intellectual and emotional strands of Hinduism including the cult of devotion. Against this background, the rejection of abstract metaphysics by the *bhaktas* denotes a spirit of strong dissent. Their general indifference to caste regulations carried a mild form of protest against the established social order. But there was no direct attempt at social reform, though the recognition of saints among outcastes amounted to a relaxation of caste rules. Here is a faint approximation to the principle of the potential divinity of man.

In terms of historical evolution the very concept of the shrine, whether it is considered to be progression or regression, was a deviation from the concept of the abstract and amorphous powers—natural or supernatural—worshipped in Vedic rituals. Vedic ritualism itself came to be replaced by āgamic ritualism by the beginning of third century A D. in the North and by the beginning of the sixth century in the South. In fact, there was a ludicrous and syncretic combination of Vedic and āgamic elements.[48] Thus, while Vedic-āgamic ritualism was applicable and relevant for only the brāhmaṇas who followed it inside the temple, non-brāhmaṇa Hindus participated through *bhakti* much as spectators vicariously participate in games.

It may be pointed out at this stage that the āgamic form of worship in temple had its own separate existence apart from the *bhakti* movement. A certain element of devotion or *bhakti* was involved in its routine, too. However, in the movement this element of *bhakti* grew out of all proportions. It exceeded all limits of rules and regulations, ritualistic or social, and proved its eccentricity by subjugating every aspect of life to this one principle; an intoxication of over development which claimed its own right of existence. Of course, no qualitative change took place, though they made the temple immensely popular through the promotion of songs, dance and story, This led to the creation of several temple servants rendering artistic service. Consequently, even after the decline of the movement though there were isolated cases of individual *bhaktas* yet in most cases they did not rise beyond the status of local celebrities. Theirs remained essentially an individual pilgrim's progress towards salvation devoid of any social implications, as was the case earlier. Therefore, it was the peculiar social background which transformed *bhakti* from an esoteric creed into a dynamic social force.

The starting point of the *bhakti* cult was the system of offering material objects like land, cattle, utensils and lamps.[49] In place of the material objects, one could offer one's own self in the spirit of service in the same way in which commendation took place. This meant that devotion was offered in return for the assumed guarantee of protection, i.e., just as the small landlord or the free peasant wanted protection from the fluctuation of fortune and encroachments of powerful neighbours, the ordinary devotee wanted protection from death, poverty and disease. A step higher, in the full intoxication of *bhakti*, the ideal devotee was not concerned with wealth and poverty or power and insecurity; and this is the attitude which nurtured the pure flame of devotion. When the movement was at the peak of its development, the most sublime and sophisticated expression of sentiments represented a spirit of equality. This was clearly against the caste system, and the spirit of renunciation was also counter to the gregarious instinct of the brāhmaṇa-kṣatriya power elite.

It is a truism to state that between precept and practice there is often a gap. While the former is confined to literature, nevertheless, the very formulation of these concepts contains a streak of dissent, protest and reform. Even if it did not change society altogether, this deviation from the tenets of orthodox philosophy, accompanied by a sense of liberation from the rigid code of ritual, certainly contributed towards the refinement of society. The shining ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity—liberty from ritual, equality of caste and fraternity in devotion—were placed before the people. Of course, untouchability for the *paraiya* and the miserable state of poverty of lower classes continued. But all this was made more acceptable, and even more dignified, in the light of the ideal of renunciation. Besides, there was at least some exposure and criticism of the evils of greed, licentiousness and sensuality. Thus there was some deviation from the unbridled course of vanity and worldliness due to the spontaneous evolution of a code of moral conduct among the community of devotees who propagated a new set of values in life. It was almost a revolutionary idea that Nantanār, the *paraiya*, could be admitted to a temple even after a series of ordeals and that Tiruppāṇa Āḷvār was counted as a favourite devotee of Viṣṇu, and worthy of being carried on the shoulders of the chief priest of the temple. A king's readiness to forget his pride and mix with commoners, apologize to the lord and priest for offences committed, and be a humble slave at the feet of the deity was in itself a spectacle that chastened the minds of the people. The freedom which the devotees enjoyed from all rituals, and even rules of society, was a step forward in establishing the individual's inherent right to rebel, provided rebellion was legitimized by devotion. These devotees mixed freely and fearlessly with kings and brāhmaṇas, assuming equality and even superiority at times. In this way they set up a parallel spiritual-social authority, different from royal courts, and brāhmaṇa councils, which derived its power from the conscience of the people. The badge of *bhakti*, in the form of the sacred ashes or the sandal paste of the forehead and chest, gave a certain immunity from punishment in this period, serving the same purpose as the sacred thread through the ages

The same deviation from social norms may be noted in the case of the status of women. Notwithstanding the injunctions of Manu and other lawgivers, the eligibility of woman for the highest honour of direct communication with god was admitted in the case of Mangaiyarkkarasi, Āṅḍāl, Kāraikkāl Ammayār, etc. This departure from orthodoxy occurred at a time when brāhmaṇa domination was responsible for suppressing women by keeping them at home and away from education, except in the case of *devadāsīs* or courtesans of the temple. The recognition of the equal status of woman with man before god implied that her spiritual inferiority and inherent wickedness were momentarily set aside. In fact, the *devadāsī* system which raised a number of educated and dedicated women to high status through renunciation was a by-product of the movement. It had a progressive content to begin with, though in later times the *devadāsīs* degenerated into common prostitutes. The readiness to dispense with rituals, priests and the restrictions of sex and caste brings out the importance attached to the individual self with its infinite capacity for development. This is what highlights those of *bhakti* elements which dissented from the orthodox creed, protested against the *varṇāśrama* code—including restrictions of sex—and reformed the social order. It is partly out of a misunderstanding of its exclusive Tamil context and partly out of a desire to discover modern ideas in early Indian society, that some scholars have exaggerated these elements to the extent of identifying the part with the whole.

Return to orthodoxy

These deviations were, it has to be remembered, partial, temporary and counterproductive. As the popularity of Jainism and Buddhism waned, and many more kings and landed magnates, patronized Hinduism through the *bhakti* movement, the openness and flexibility of the movement gradually disappeared, i.e., it became a part of the establishment. Intellectual dissent—anti-ritualism, anti-caste protest, etc.—came to an end by the beginning of the tenth century. The *Āḷvārs* and the *Nāyanārs* no longer exist; instead their place is taken up by the *ācāryas*, all of whom were brāhmaṇas and scrupulous ritualists. Naturally, with the threat of heretical creeds disappearing and with the achievement of social harmony, the forward urge of the *bhakti* cult came to an end. There was a return to orthodoxy in all walks of life, especially in the field of culture. The temples with enormous landed property and established position in society became the conservative custodians of power and wealth. In the new context, there was no place for the aberrations of the devotee although the exploits of earlier saints continued to be sung and cherished. *Maṭhas*, headed by brāhmaṇa *ācāryas*, increased in number and championed the cause of the *varṇāśramadharma*. Kings depended no more on the prop of *bhakti* for consolidating their political power. Even the Tamil language was increasingly replaced by Sanskrit in the field of religion. The living spirit of the *bhakti* movement which rebelled against many things now gave place to the decorative charm of its myth and literature.

NOTES AND REEERENCES

[1] An earlier wave could be identified in the Vedic Śastraic-Purāṇic influences in the literature of the Śangam. For details, see M G S. Narayanan, "The *Vedic Sāstraic-Purānic* elements in Tamil Sangam Literature" *PIHC*, Aligarh, pp. 76-91.

[2] The identity and chronology of individual saints have been subject to much controversy among scholars. We have adopted the dates as given by K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India*, 1976, 3rd edn, Madras, pp. 368-72.

[3] Sundaramurti's *Tiruttoṇḍattogai* shows a comprehensive understanding of the Śaiva saints. See K Subrahmanyam, ed, *Periyapurāṇam*, Srivaikuntam, 1974, pp. 54-7. Nammālvār's knowledge of the temples of South India is again an index to this fact. See *Tiruvaymoli*, K Gopalacharyar, ed, *Nalayira Prabandham*, Madras, 1959, Part 24, 1-196.

[4] For a discussion of the Sanskrit terms *bhakti*, *bhakta*, *bhagavān*, *bhāgavata*, etc., see Suvira Jaiswal, *The Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism*, Delhi, 1967, pp. 37-9, 110-11. This point is strengthened by the fact that in the Indonesian language, possessing a large number of Sanskrit words borrowed in the ancient period, the word *bakta* (*bhakta*) is used in the sense of a servant. See Venugopala Panikkar, "Bahasa Indonesia", *Sarani*, Calicut University, 1977 p. 32.

[5] A large number of inscriptions from early medieval South India pertain to temples. T.N. Subrahmanyan, *South Indian Temple Inscriptions*, Madras, 1954, 4 vols.

[6] There are many temples in which the saints are dified. See 400 of 1916 which records the consecration of a temple to Kulśekhara Āḷvār in *Mannarkoyil*. Bronze statues of Ceramān Perumāl Nāyanār and Sundaramurti Nāyanār are set up in the temple at Tiruvancaikkalam. Events from the lives of the Śaiva saints are depicted in temple paintings in Tanjore. R Champakalakshmi, "New Light on the Chola Frescoes of Tanjore". *JIH*, Golden Jubilee Volume, pp. 349-60. For Śaiva sculptures, see *ARE*, 1908, para 65 and 66 and *ibid*, 1920, p.102ff.

[7] K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, "Hindu Renaissance of the Pallava Period", *The Hindu*, 25 May 1961.

[8] See V. Kanakasabhai, *The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago*, Madras, 1966, p. 10.

[9] Kalladanar, *Akanānūru*, 209 There are different theories regarding the origin of the Pallavas but there is no certainty about their early history. This view is put forward by the authors as a possible solution to the riddle.

[10] C. Minakshi, *Administration and Social Life Under the Pallavas*, Madras, 1938, passim. See also Sastri, *A History of South India*, pp. 146-50.

[11] See S R. Balasubrahmanyan, *Early Chola Temples*, New Delhi,

1971 *Middle Chola Temples*, Faridabad, 1975.

[12] Sastri, *A History of South India*, pp. 174-5

[13] K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Pāṇḍyan Kingdom*, London, 1929.

[14] M.G.S. Narayanan, *Political and Social Conditions of Kerala Under the Kulaśekhara Empire*, Unpublished Ph. D Dissertation, University of Kerala, 1972.

[15] See n. 5 above. See also K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Colas*, Madras, 1955, pp. 635-40. There is the case of Māṇikkavaāśgar, one of the greatest names in the history of Tamil Śaivism who belongs to c. 9th century but who is not, strangely enough, counted among the *Nāyanārs*. However, his *Tiruvācakam* embodies all the qualities characteristic of the *bhakti* movement including the superb form of ecstacy, opposition to Buddhism, attachment to the temples, and complete surrender to the master. For a recent study of the saint, see Glenn E Yocum. "Mainkkavacakar's image of Śiva", *History of Religions*, xvi, no. 1, 20-41.

[16] T.V. Mahalingam, *Kanchipuram in Early South Indian History*, Bombay, 1969, pp. 64-76.

[17] N.P, Unni, ed, *Mattavilāsa*, Trivandrum, 1974.

[18] Mahalingam, op. cit., pp. 71-3

[19] Sastri, *The Pāṇḍyan Kingdom*, pp. 59-66.

[20] Narayanan, *Kulaśekhara Empire*, pp. 623-36.

[21] Ibid. Also M.G.S. Narayanan, *Cultural Symbiosis in Kerala*, Trivandrum, 1972, pp. 31-7.

[22] For the inscription, see *Select Inscriptions*, i, Calcutta, 1942, 90-1. For the identification of the pillar in a temple complex, see John Irwin, "The Heliodorus Pillar: A Fresh Appraisal", *Art and Archaeology Research Paper*, no. 6, London, Dec. 1974.

[23] *CII*, iii.

[24] Jaiswal, op. cit., pp. 112-13; D D Kosambi, *The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical Outline*, London, 1965, pp. 114-15.

[25] Minakshi, op cit., p 176; Narayanan, *Kulaśekhara Empire*, pp. 556-9

[26] See no. 250 of 1926; no. 154 to 1895, *SII*, iii, no. 202: no. 120 of 1925; Narayanan, *Kulaśekhara Empire*, pp. 568-71.

[27] K.C. Varadachari, *Āḷvārs of South India*, Bombay, 1866, p. 1.

[28] Ibid. p. 105.

[29] Ibid. pp 133-4.

[30] T.N. Subranmanyan, op. cit.

[31] The songs of the saints testify to this. For example there are only six hymns of eleven or twelve verses each by Sambandhar, thirtynine by Appar and four by Sundarar which are not dedicated to particular temples. Even many of these eulogise the temple cult. With regard to the Śaiva *Nāyanār's* relation to specific temples, see George W Spencer, "The Sacred Geography of the Tamil Śaivite Hymns", *Numen*, 17, December, 1970, pp. 232-44. Kamil Zvelebil also points out the importance of the cult of sacred places to both Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava saints. See *The Smile of Murugan*, Leiden, 1973, pp. 198-99

[32] *Periyapurāṇam*, op. cit., pp. 229-68, 665-73.

[33] *TAS*, ii, i no. 9 (3), 85-6; no. 7 (L) 46·8, 131-207.

[34] Sastri, *A History of South India*, p. 425.

[35] Ceramān Perumāl, *Adiyula*, in M. Raghava Aiyangar, ed, *Caraventar Ceyyutkovai*, ii, Trivandrum, 1951, 136-64.

[36] T.A. Gopinatha Rao, *The History of Śrī Vaiṣṇavas*, Madras, 1923, p. 5.

[37] *Periyapurāṇam*, op. cit., p. 629.

[38] Ibid. p. 625.

[39] Ibid. p. 66.

[40] Ibid. p. 81.

[41] Ibid. p 271.

[42] Nilakanta Sastri has pointed out how Cekkilar's *Periyapurāṇam* is indebted to Cāmuṇḍarāya's *Trisastilakṣaṇamahāpurāṇa* for its title. So also, even the number 63 for the *Nāyanārs* is an imitation of the 63 Jaina saints of the *Mahāpurāṇa*. See n. 7 above.

[43] *Periyapurāṇam*, op. cit., p. 54.

[44] Aiyangar. ed., loc. cit.

[45] *TAS*, ii, iii, 131-207. See also T N.Subrahmanyan, op. cit.

[46] See n. 4 above.

[47] See for example, *Perumal Tirumoli*, IV, 2; *Mukundamālā*, V. 3 Here is a free rendering of a hymn of Sundarar, given by K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar which offers another typical illustration of this sentiment:

I'm the slave of all His devotees true.
The slave of all the laureates of the spirit,
The slave of those whose minds do rest in God,
The slave of all the inhabitants of Tiruvarur,
The slave of the priests who daily conduct the divine
service thrice,
The slave of the ascetics anointed all over,
The slave of the *bhaktas* beyond Tamilakam's confines,
The slave for ever of Tiruvarur's Lord.

See R C Majumdar, ed, *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, iii, Bombay, 1954, 1962, 331-2.

[48] See Sastri, *The Colas*, pp. 635-6.

[49] T.N. Subrahmanyan, op. cit , passim.

14

R S. SHARMA

Material Milieu of Tāntricism

To the modern educated people tāntricism means essentially orgiastic rites involving addiction to five *makāras*, *matsya* (fish), *māṃsa* (meat), *madya* (intoxicating drink), *maithuna* (sex) and *mudrā* (physical gestures), but it possessed many other important elements. Tāntric texts and iconography gave a great importance to the cult of the mother goddess, which was confined not only to the Śākta system, but also appeared in a pronounced form in Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, Buddhist and Jain systems. It generally provided for the initiation of women and śūdras, irrespective of their *varṇas*. Śūdra teachers (*ācāryas*) could initiate śūdras and Caṇḍālas, and could perform certain sacrifices.

The tantras served an important social purpose by prescribing numerous rituals and remedies not only for the day-to-day diseases but also for snake-bites, mouse-bites, bites by poisonous insects, and injuries supposed to be caused by ghosts. Remedies were laid down for the protection of cereals against being eaten by mice and vermins. Rites and occult practices were supposed to avert the adverse effects of poison, planets and diseases, and drugs were to be administered accompanied by incantations. The medieval *tāntrika* also acted as physician

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and astrologer (*jyotiṣī*). The practice continues even now in Nepal and Mithila where the *tāntrika* foretells the future and the dates of eclipses and festivals.

Tāntricism laid down numerous magical rituals to achieve liberation (*mukti*) and enjoyment (*bhukti*), and in fact to fulfil all kinds of the material desires (*kāmyāni*) of the people. According to a Vaiṣṇavite tāntric text of about the sixth century A.D. the tantra variety of Siddhānta is credited with the realization of the *caturvarga*[1], which obviously means wealth (*artha*), piety (*dharma*), sensual gratification (*kāma*) and liberation (*mokṣa*). Rituals provided for obtaining the elixir of life. Rites were laid down for turning earth and base metals into gold at a time when the yellow metal was scarce, for the paucity of gold coins in the four centuries following the fall of the Gupta empire is striking. Tāntricism popularized *pūjā* and adopted *bhakti*, the doctrine of complete surrender to the god and the *guru* by making various offerings to them. It was institutionalized by means of temples which housed Śiva, Viṣṇu, Śakti, and many new folk divinities, by monastic organizations which gave the paramount place to the *guru* or the *ācārya*, and finally by a vast corpus of written literature which embodied the tāntric traditions and practices. It was therefore in effect identical with Hinduism in medieval times. Its outlook was highly secular and materialistic, and no other sect was so close to the life of various classes of people as it was. This was perhaps the chief reason why it has had a long vogue in India, and in some ways survives even today. Stress on the symbolical and philosophical aspect of tāntricism implies its restriction to a narrow circle of expert practitioners, but the contents of the published texts show that the greater portion is concerned with rituals and practices connected with the day-to-day, mundane life of the people.

Weber ascribes the origin of tāntricism to the greed of the brāhmaṇas for fees which led them to offer their services for numerous folk deities, and to a sense of competition with Jainism and Buddhism[2]. Possibly the brāhamaṇas invented new means of livelihood, but by the time tāntricism became a force in early medieval times Jainism and Buddhism had ceased to offer any serious challenge to brāhmaṇism. Some people assign psychosexual origins to tāntricism, and others explain its rise and growth in purely spiritual and mystic terms. But why all this happens in medieval India has not been explained. In our opinion the origin and growth of tāntricism can be better understood if we consider the material milieu of the country in the early Middle Ages.

A remarkable development of the early medieval period was land grants to priests and temples on a large scale. The distribution of land grants to brāhmaṇas indicates their advent in north Bengal in the fifth century, in east Bengal in the sixth century, in Assam in the fifth century and in Orissa in the seventh century. Frequent land donations to the brāhmaṇas in Gujarat began from the seventh century. About the same time they started receiving lands in the Kangra area, Chamba and the Himalayan state of Nepal.

The Vākāṭakas made numerous land donations to the brāhmaṇas in central and western Madhya Pradesh. Their contemporaries and some Gupta vassals donated lands to the brāhmaṇas in north-eastern Madhya Pradesh in the fourth and fifth centuries. But the south-eastern part of this state was brāhmanized for the first time between the sixth and the seventh centuries under the Nala, Pāndava and Śarabhapurīya princes.[3]

In the upper Deccan, in Maharashtra, the Sātavāhanas started the practice of land grants to the Buddhists in the first century A.D. Then they turned their attention to Andhra and set up the Buddhist monastery at Nagarjunikonda in the middle of the third century A.D. The plantation and patronage of the Buddhist monks in this tribal area was continued by the Ikṣvākus in the third and fourth centuries, and even in the period of decay Hsüan Tsang speaks of many monasteries in Andhra. Apparently the Buddhist establishments were maintained by land grants, of which we have two epigraphic examples in the beginning of the seventh century. The Buddhists brought to this area an advanced social order and culture which came into conflict with the backward culture of the Megalithic people. The eastern portion of Andhra was brāhmaṇized in the third and fourth centuries under the Ikṣvākus, Śālaṅkāyanas and Viṣṇukuṇḍins, but the western portion was brāhmaṇized from the fifth century. The western part of Mysore came under brāhmaṇical influence in the fifth-sixth centuries under the brāhmaṇa dynasty of the Kadambas.

But it was under the Cālukyas that brāhmaṇa settlements came to be distributed over the whole state in the sixth-eighth centuries.

Brāhmaṇas were introduced in large numbers into Tamil Nadu by the Coḷas from the eighth century, and, as land grants show, their settlements increased considerably in the ninth and tenth centuries. Although Śankarācārya is placed in the beginning of the ninth century, land grants do not show large-scale brāhmaṇical settlements in Kerala until the tenth-eleventh centuries.

In the Coḷa dominions the existence of numerous villages dominated by the brāhmaṇas is attested by inscriptions, and also corroborated by the Saṃhitās belonging to both the Vaikhānasa and Pañcarātra schools of Vaiṣṇavism. The Vaikhānasīya *Kāśyapa Saṃhitā* asks the king to bestow on Vaiṣṇava brāhmaṇas a prosperous village which possesses all the necessary resources including labourers (*bhṛtyas*) and is free from the depredations of robbers and inimical elements.[4] The village is defined in this text as a habitation of the *vipras* and their *bhṛtyas*,[5] it is also called the *agrahāra* of the chief *vipras*.[6] Generally the Pāñcarātra texts contain chapters on the foundation of the village,[7] which is a necessary precondition for the construction of the temple. The establishment of shrines and temples has to be preceded by colonization and introduction of new methods of cultivation.

Except Tamil Nadu and Kerala, it was in the fifth-seventh centuries that large-scale land grants came to be made to the brāhmaṇas in the peripheral areas such as Assam, Bengal, Orissa, central India, Gujarat and the Deccan, and also in the Himalayan areas and Nepal. Inscriptions show that several brāhmaṇas were introduced as landed beneficiaries by a single charter. In the fifth century 1,000 brāhmaṇas were granted land in Maharashtra in one district and at one time by Pravarasena II.[8] In the first half of the seventh century forty brāhmaṇas were twice endowed with lands in Gujarat. Two hundred and five brāhmaṇas were granted land in Assam in the same century. In *c.* A.D. 650 more than one hundred brāhmaṇas were assigned lands in the wild tracts of the Tipperah district of east Bengal. In the second half of the seventh century land grants were made in the Cuttack area of Orissa to twenty-three brāhmaṇas in one case and to twelve in another. A century later, in the Balasore district two hundred brāhmaṇas received lands.[9]

The brāhmaṇa immigrants to the east, west and south-west of their original home in mid-India, which was considered to have set the norm for the whole of the country, had to deal with people who were at different levels of culture. Some of them were semi-brāhmaṇized; others were completely tribal. In Bengal, Orissa, central India and the Deccan, for instance, the brāhmaṇas came into close contact with the Śabaras, who are mentioned in early medieval inscriptions and still inhabit parts of Orissa and the adjoining areas of Madhya Pradesh. They came into contact with the Pulindas in Madhya Pradesh, where a sixth century charter mentions a land donor called Pulindabhaṭa, who may have been a tribal Pulinda improvised into a brāhmaṇa or a kṣatriya. We hear of a chief called Pulindarāja, who prevailed upon a Bhauma-kara ruler in Orissa (ninth century) to grant land for the maintenance of a Śaiva temple and Śaiva ascetics.[10]

The penetration of the brāhmaṇas into the tribal belts added enormously to the number of śūdras. Since the tribal people were given a low social rank, some spiritual compensation was necessary. According to the Vedic practice they could not undergo the *upanayana* initiation, could not perform sacrifices and recite the Vedic *mantras*. This religious situation had developed in Madhyadeśa where the śūdras mostly served as slaves, artisans and agricultural labourers. But agrarian expansion in the early Middle Ages under the aegis of the brāhmaṇas was accomplished through the efforts of the local people who were recruited as śūdras. Kauṭilya recommends the enlistment of śūdra cultivators (*karṣakas*) for new settlements. For the first time śūdras as a class are mentioned as cultivators by Hsüan Tsang and the legal commentator Asahāya in the seventh century. They naturally came to have some rights and interests in the land in which brāhmaṇa and other beneficiaries enjoyed superior rights. This became inconsistent with the traditional ritual status of the śūdras which had to be raised by providing initiation for them in the tāntric sects.

Women clearly enjoyed a higher status in the tribal belts where the cult of the mother goddess was widely prevalent.

Since in the Sanskrit texts they were bracketed with the śūdras, it was only proper that their ritual status be also raised, and this was done by prescribing tāntric initiation for them.

The cult of the mother goddess had prevailed in the country from a much earlier time, but only in the sixth century did it acquire an outstanding place in the literature, written traditions of the Buddhist and brāhmaṇical sects. The aboriginal mother goddesses came to be worshipped in the form of Śakti or Buddhist Tārā, Śāktism emerged as a religious factor in the sixth century and became a strong force from the ninth century.[11]

The names of the mother goddess in different areas reveal their aboriginal origin. The *Hevajra Tantra* (also called *Yoginī Tantra*), a Buddhist work of about the eighth century[12] composed possibly in Bengal, mentions such goddesses as Vetālī, Ghasmarī, Śavarī, Caṇḍālī and Ḍombinī.[13] Parṇaśavarī, clothed in leaves, was the goddess of the Śavaras who celebrated their festival *śavarotsava* in Bengal [14] In a tantra text Śiva is called *śavara*.[14] The *Gauḍavaha* (vv. 285-347), a work of about the eighth century, identifies Vindhyavāsinī with Kālī or Pārvatī, and associates her with the Kols and the Śabaras.[16] The *Harivaṃśa* (II. iii. 7-8), a text of about the same time, adds that the goddess was worshipped by the Śabaras, Pulindas and Barbaras.[17] Śakti is known as Mātaṅgī, which shows that originally the goddess belonged to the Mātaṅga tribe. She is also called Caṇḍālī, which indicates that she was a goddess of the Caṇḍālas. According to the *Kulārṇava Tantra* a *caṇḍālī*, *carmakārī*, *māgadhī*, *pukkasī*, *śvapacī*, *khaṭṭakī*, *kaivarti*, *vaiśyayoṣitaḥ*, *śastrajīvinī*, *kauñcikī* (or *kanduki*), *Śauṇḍikī*, *rañjakī*, *gāyakī*, *rajakī*, *śilpinī*, or *kaulikī*, who is initiated in *tantra*, *mantra*, *yoga* and *mudrā*, is a virgin, and observes the *samayācāra*, is to be worshipped as Śakti. If these are not available, the Śakti may belong to any of the four *varṇas*.[18] Obviously the list contains the names of mostly śūdra and untouchable women, generally of tribal origin.

The old matrilineal tribal belt has shrunk over the centuries, but even now according to O. R. Ehrenfels, matriarchal tribes and castes, numbering more than one hundred, are found in Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Mysore and Kerala.[19] To this may be added small pockets in the tribal zone of eastern

Madhya Pradesh, south Bihar and the neighbouring areas of Orissa and West Bengal. Thus the present distribution of matrilineal peoples supports the aboriginal origins of the cult of the mother goddess.

Though of earlier origin, only from the sixth century onwards were the shrines of the mother goddess accorded a regular place in the expanding, all-pervading brāhmaṇical tradition. Several *pīṭhas* of the mother goddess in Andhra were founded in early medieval times. At Tirupati the temple of Padmāvatī, which has tāntric associations, was established some time earlier than the eighth century, to which belongs the famous Vaiṣṇavite Balaji temple of that town. What is further noteworthy, almost all temples of 64 *yoginīs*, manifesting the mother goddess in 64 forms, are found in the tribal belt of eastern Madhya Pradesh and Orissa We know of five temples of 64 yoginīs, of which one is in Bheraghat near Jabalpur and another in Khajuraho; both were founded in the ninth century. A third is found near Sambalpur at Rampur in the former Patna (Bolangir) state in Orissa, and a fourth in Kalabandī in the same province.[20] A fifth temple is found at Dudhai in the Lalitpur district of Uttar Pradesh.[21] Apparently these temples were built in early medieval times to accommodate tribal goddesses.

Once the shrines of mother goddesses were established, attempts were made to give them a broad religious sanction in the literate Sanskrit texts, Buddhist and brāhmaṇical. The *Kubjikāmatatantra*, copied in the sixth-seventh centuries according to H. P. Sastri,[22] enumerates five *pīṭhas*: Uḍḍiyāna in Orissa, Jāla or Jalandhar in Panjab, Pūraṇa in Maharashtra, Mataṅga in Śrīśaila in Andhra, and Kāmākhyā in Assam.[23] The *Hevajra Tantra* mentions only four holy *pīṭhas*, which can be identified with Jalandhar, Uḍḍiyāna (in the Swat valley), Paurṇagiri and Kāmarūpa.[24] The list reappears with slight variations in the *Kālikā Purāṇa*, a work of about the tenth century and also in the almost contemporary Buddhist text *Sādhanamālā*[25] Significantly enough, none of these earliest shrines was situated in mid-India.

The *Hevajra Tantra* mentions twenty-one other places as the meeting-ground of the yoginīs. These comprise three *upapīṭhas* called Mālava, Sindhu and Nagara; four *kṣetras* (fields) called Munmuni, Kāruṇyapāṭaka, Devīkoṭa and Karmārapāṭaka; four *upakṣetras* called Kulatā, Arbuda, Goḍ(d)āvarī and Himādri; four *chandohas* called Harikela, Lampāka, Kañcika and Saurastra; three *upachandohas* called Kalinga, the Isle of Gold and Kokaṇa or Kāṃkana; and three *pīlavas* called Caritra, Kosala and Vindhyākaumārapaurikā.[26] The list may not be exhaustive and all the places may not be located, but most places associated by this eighth century text with the mother cult were certainly situated outside mid-India.

Some tāntric texts can be clearly associated with particular tribes. This seems to be true of the *Mātaṅga-pārameśvara Tantra*,[27] which was evidently composed to serve the needs of the Mātaṅgas living in eastern Madhya Pradesh and Andhra. A *Śaiva* work called *Mātaṅga Āgama* existed in south India, and the temple of Mātaṅgeśvara was built at Mahabalipuram in the beginning of the eighth century. We know of certain Śavara tantras which contain *mantras* composed in dialects of regional languages,[28] evidently of late medieval times.

Almost all the tāntric texts were composed in the outlying tribal areas. The *Jayākhya Saṃhitā*, although its manuscript was copied in 1187 in Nepal,[29] was written somewhere in western India in the fifth century. The *Kubjikāmatatantra* was copied in the late Gupta character of the sixth-seventh centuries in Nepal.[30] The *Niśvāsa Samhitā* was written in Nepal in the transitional Gupta character of the eighth century. The *Sarvajñānottara Tantra*, although a comparatively late work, possesses a fragmentary manuscript in Gupta script.[31] Although the manuscript of the *Hevajra Tantra* noticed by Bendall is dated A.D. 1200 and is in Bengali character, the *Yogaratnamālā*, a commentary on it noticed by H. P. Sastri,[32] was written in the transitional Gupta character, which naturally presupposes an earlier origin of that tantra, possibly eighth century. Several other tantra manuscripts from Nepal now preserved in the Vir Library were copied in the tenth-twelfth centuries. The *Pārameśvarī Tantra* was copied in 859,[33] and the *Saura Saṃhitā* in 941,[34] although it has two leaves stated to be in the Gupta script and giving several tantra formulas.[35] The *Kiraṇa Tantra* was copied in 924.[36] All these tantra manuscripts were prepared in Nepal well before the Muslim invasions of north-eastern India, and could not have been imports from northern

India. They seem to have been composed in Nepal from about the sixth century when the brāhmaṇas and the brāhmaṇized Buddhist monks came into wide contact with the tribal people of the valley.

From Nepal tāntric texts, especially the Buddhist ones, may have been taken to Tibet and China. Amoghavajra, a monk of north India and a brāhmaṇa lived in China between 746 and 771 and translated seventy-seven works including several tantras.[37] Atiśa Dīpankara had acquired proficiency in the four classes of tantras, and Padmasambhava of Uḍḍiyāna looked after the tāntric part of the Buddhist liturgy.[38]

The Buddhist Mantrayāna based on the tantras is said to have originated in Andhra in the sixth century.[39] The earliest Buddhist tāntric texts, the *Guhyasamāja*, *Vajraśikhara*, *Sarvatathā-gatatattvasaṃgraha* and *Mahāvairocana* are attributed to the sixth and seventh centuries, and because of their traditional association with Nāgārjuna and Nāgabodhi and the south assigned to Andhra or Kalinga.[40] Obviously the ground for the rise of Mahāyāna and subsequently the tantras was prepared by the plantation of the Buddhist monks in the Guntur district by the later Sātavāhanas and the Ikṣvākus.

From Andhra and Kalinga the Buddhist tantras spread to Vanga and Magadha where Nalanda developed as a centre of their study in the reign of the Pālas.[41] According to the tradition in this area they were handed down in the most secret manner up to the time of Dharmakīrti (600-15).[42] But it was only in the eighth-twelfth centuries, possibly in its later half,[43] that the Siddhas called Saraha, Luipā, Kambala, Padmavajra, Kṛṣṇācārya, Lalitavajra, Gambhīravajra and Piṭo popularized the Sahajayāna tāntricism.[44] Manuscripts of the *Kulārṇavatantra* have been recovered from north and east Bengal, and the Kaula practices survive in Mithila down to our times. The nine Nāthas are thought to be the authors of the Kaula tantras. A manuscript copy of the *Mahakaulajñāna-vinirṇaya*, taken to Nepal by Matsyendranātha, has been found in about the same type of the transitional Gupta script as found in the Cambridge University Library manuscript of the *Pārameśvarī Tantra* copied in 859. The work is said to be *candradvīpavinirgata*, which means that it came from Candradvīpa in Backerganj in east Bengal.[45]

Several Sanskrit tāntric texts in Oriya script are found in medieval Orissa,[46] and two of these, the *Kaulacūḍāmaṇi* and the *Vārāhī Tantra*, can be ascribed to the ninth-tenth centuries.[47] A manuscript called *Vajrayoginīsādhana* of the Sahajayāna school, although copied in Nepal in 1154, contains rituals recommended by Indrabhūti, a king of Orissa. Tāntricism was not introduced into Kashmir until the eighth century, and its literature flourished there from the tenth century.[48] The most famous author was Abhinavagupta, whose family had migrated 250 years ago from Kānyakubja to Kashmir where it was granted a big *jāgir*.[49] He wrote a comprehensive treatise called the *Tantrāloka*, which systematically presents the teachings of the Kula and Trika systems. He seems to have been very much influenced by his Kaulika teacher Śambhunātha, from whom he learnt Kaulika texts and rituals at Jalandhar.[50]

A few tāntric texts under the Jain influence were compiled in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Mysore during the early medieval period. The *Samaraicchakahā* by Haribhadra Sūri in Gujarat around the eighth century is saturated with tāntric ideas and practices. The *Jvālinī Kalpa* by Indramaṇi was completed in 939 at Mānyakheṭa although the cult was started earlier by a tāntric teacher of the Draviḍa monastic sect in the Chamrajnagar taluk of the Mysore district.[51] Similarly the *Bhairava Padmāvatī Kalpa*, another tāntric text, was compiled in Mysore by a Jain monk in 1047.[52]

In addition to these Jain tāntric texts twenty-eight *Āgamas*, both Śaivite and Vaiṣṇavite, were composed in south India in early medieval times, especially after the eighth century, and were used by the followers of the tāntric texts in constructing temples, installing image and conducting worship. The Śaiva Āgamas are mentioned in a Pallava inscription[55] in the Kailāśanātha temple which was built in the eighth century. According to T. Gopinath Rao[54] the *Uttara-Kāraṇāgama* of the Śaivas along with some other Śaiva Āgamas prescribes the recitation of some Drāviḍa Vedas or hymns composed by a few Śaiva poets, the last of whom belonged to the ninth century. A Kashmir Śaiva poet, who flourished towards the end of the ninth century, refers to two Tamil Śaiva works of the same period.[55]

Of the Vaiṣṇava Āgamas, popularly known as the Saṃhitās, the prose version of the *Vaikānasāgama* seems to be the oldest;[56]

its metrical version ordains that the Drāviḍa Vedas, the *Prabandhas* of the Śrīvaiṣṇavas or *Āḷvārs* (eighth-ninth centuries), should be sung in front of the divine processions.[57] Some Pañcarātra texts such as the *Ahirbudhnya*, *Jayākhya* and *Sāttvata* were composed between the fifth and the ninth centuries probably in northern and western India, but they mainly circulated in south India.[58]

Thus early tāntric texts are chiefly found in Kashmir, Nepal, Bengal, Assam, Orissa, and in western and south India, although their number in Mithila is not inconsiderable. It may be argued that climatic and political factors explain their preservation from early medieval times. But the tantras continued to be composed in these regions down to the eighteenth century and even later. In late medieval times most authors belonged to Bengal, quite a few belonged to Maharashtra and south India, some belonged to Orissa, Kashmir, Kumaon and Nepal, but the number of those who belonged to Varanasi was limited.[59] We may add that tāntric survivals are more noticeable in the peripheral areas than in Āryāvarta or Madhyadeśa, which was the heart of brāhmaṇism. On account of the conversion of the majority of the people of north-western India (now Pakistan) to Islam, tāntric practices have practically disappeared in that area, but this is not true of the neighbouring Himalayan areas in eastern Panjab and U.P. Of 108 *pīṭhas* mentioned in the works of the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries, those which can be identified lie mostly outside Madhyadeśa. Hence tāntric texts and practices survive precisely in the regions where they originated.

Therefore the problem of the origin of tāntricism can be looked at from different angles: acculturation of the peripheral areas through land grants to the monks and brāhmaṇas, the aboriginal background of the tāntric mother goddesses, the antiquity and distribution of the *pīṭhas*, the association of the Śabaras, Mātaṅgas, etc., with the different tantras, the dates and provenance of the tāntric texts, and finally the survivals of tāntricism. All these considerations lead to the single conclusion that this religion originated in the outer, tribal circle and not in Madhyadeśa. Of course a few Western scholars[60] look for non-Indian sources of tāntricism, as they do for some other aspects of Indian culture, but this survey does not provide any basis for such a supposition.

Winternitz thinks that "the Tantras and the curious excrescences and degenerations of religion described in them are not drawn from popular belief or from popular traditions either of the aboriginal inhabitants or of the Aryan immigrants, but they are the pseudo scientific productions of theologians . . . ."[61] While the efforts of the priests to invent gainful rituals cannot be discounted, the close connection of tāntricism with aboriginal areas, tribes, and goddesses cannot be ignored. The mystic diagrams (*yantras*), and the sacred circles (*cakras*) invented by the *śāktas*, and the different *maṇḍala krama* rituals observed by the tāntric worshippers, possibly continued the veneration of stone tools and weapons as cult symbols, which were often associated with fertility rites.[62]

Sexual intercourse is considered to be one of the worst rituals of tāntricism, but among primitive peoples in India and outside sexual rites formed an important part of their agricultural magic. These were believed to promote the fertility of the earth and the prosperity of the people. Since agriculture originally lay in the province of women, such rites originated and exclusively developed in their hands.[63] Unfortunately tāntricism was seized by members of leisured upper classes, and distorted to provide them sexual and sensual gratifications. The erotic sculptures at Khajuraho and Konarak are a very costly affair, and could be afforded only by princes, chiefs and landlords.

Of course the same variety of tāntricism is not found in all the areas. In Magadha, Orissa, Bengal, Assam and Nepal the existing Buddhist background gave rise to the Vajrayāna and Sahajayāna tāntricism. Buddhist tantras possibly originated in Andhra, modified the hierarchical Mahāyāna Buddhism in favour of women and the lower orders, and spread to other areas. In parts of Madhya Pradesh, where numerous Vaiṣṇava antiquities and images of mother goddesses have been found from Gupta times, tāntricism assumed the form of Pāñcarātra and transformed Vaiṣṇavism by introducing the mother goddess into this religion, This also possibly happened later in Andhra and Tamil Nadu. In the semi-Hindu areas of Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra and Tamil Nadu, the existing religion of Śaivism was infected with tāntricism, which also affected Jainism in Mysore, Maharashtra and Gujarat. None of these areas was sufficiently brāhmaṇized or feudalized till the sixth century, Tāntricism therefore was the ultimate product of the brāhmaṇical colonization of the tribal areas through the process of land grants. Land grants gave rise to not only serfdom in the outer circle[64] but also to *bhakti* and tāntricism, all of which eventually penetrated Madhyadeśa.

The confrontation between the brāhmaṇa beneficiaries and the tribal people created social and economic problems which were partly solved through tāntricism. On the one hand the new religion welcomed in its ranks women, śūdras and the incoming aborigines; on the other it recognized the existing social and feudal hierarchy. Therefore it was acceptable to all sections of people. It was a religious attempt at social reconciliation and integration rather than at the accentuation of the social conflict. Even the Buddhist *saṃgha* closed its doors to slaves and debtors, but the tāntric *cakra* opened its doors to all sections of people irrespective of *varṇa*, sex and other considerations.

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[2] Max Weber, *The Religion of India* (Glencoe, Illinois, 1958), p. 297.

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[5] *viprānāṃ sabhṛtyānāṃ nivāsa grāma iti*. ch. xiv,

[6] Ibid.

[7] *Pāñcarātraprasādaprasādhanam*, chs. i-x of the "Kriyāpāda", *Pādmasaṃhitā*, ed. H. Daniel Smith (Madras, 1963), p. 16, fn. 1.

[8] *Select Inscriptions*, no. 62, ll. 1920,

[9] For more instances see B. P. Mazumdar, "Collective Ladgrants in Early Medieval Inscriptions", *JASB*, x (1668), 7-17.

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[13] Ibid.

[14] R. P. Chanda. *The Indo-Aryan Races*, pt, I (Rajshahi, 1916), p.126.

[15] H. P. Sastri, *A Catalogue of Palm-Leaf and Selected Paper Mss. Belonging to the Darbar Library*, Nepal (Calcutta, 1905), i. Preface, p. lxxv. The text is called *Siddhapañcāsikā*.

[16] D. C. Sircar, "The Śākta Pīṭhas", *JRASB*, xiv (1948), 20, fn. I.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ed. Tārānātha Vidyāratna (London, 1917), vii. 42-46.

[19] *Mother-Right in India* (Hyderabad, 1941) pp. 18-35, quoted in D. C. Sircar, ed, *The Śakti Cult and Tārā* (University of Calcutta, 1967), p. 67.

[20] J. N. Banerjea, *Paurāṇic and Tāntric Religion* (University of Calcutta, 1966), pp. 130-31.

[21] Vidya Prakash, *Khajuraho* (Bombay, 1967), p. 11, fn. 4.

[22] Op. cit., p. lxxviii.

[23] Ibid. lxxx.

[24] i. vii. 12; D. C. Sircar, *JRASB*, xiv (1948), 12-13. There is some controversy about the identification of Uḍḍiyāna. Some place it in Orissa, and others in the Swat valley; but whichever is correct it certainly lay outside Madhyadeśa.

[25] D. C. Sircar, *JRASB*, xiv (1948), 12-13.

[26] I. vii, 12-18.

[27] H. P. Sastri, op. cit , lxviii. The ms. is in Nagari character, and is not old, Ibid. p. 219.

[28] Chakravarty, op. cit., p. 23.

[29] H. P. Sastri, op. cit., p. lxxvii.

[30] Ibid. pp. lxxviii-lxxix.

[31] Ibid. pp. lxxiv-lxxv.

[32] Ibid. ii (Calcutta, 1915), Preface, pp. xii-xiii.

[33] Ibid. i, Preface, p. lxxvii.

[34] Ibid. p. lxxvi.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid. ii, 99. It tries to regulate the whole life of the people. It deals with purification, expiation, diet, seats and consecration of temples and images (Ibid. Preface, p. xxiv).

[37] Chakravarty, op. cit., p. 26, fn. 11.

[38] Ibid. p 21.

[39] A. K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism* (Delhi, 1970), p. 485.

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[42] Chakravarty, op. cit , p. 21, fn. 12.

[43] P. C. Bagchi, *Studies in the Tantras* (Calcutta University, 1939), p. 74.

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[45] H. P. Sastri, op. cit., ii, Preface, pp. xviii-xix.

[46] J. N. Banerjea, op. cit., pp. 130-31. A manuscript of this tantra, which belongs to the southern school, is preserved in the Durbar Library of Nepal (H. P. Sastri, op. cit., ii, 186).

[47] H P. Sastri, op. cit., ii, Preface, p. xii.

[48] K. C Pandey, *Abhinavaguptc—An H'storical and Philosophical Study* (Chowkhamba, Benaras, 1935), p. 84.

[49] Ibid. p. 4.

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[51] R. N. Nandi, "Social and Religious Dnvelopments in the Deccan" [c. A.D. 600-1000] (Ph. D. thesis, Patna University, 1969), pp. 454-55.

[52] Ibid. p. 460.

[53] Hultzsch, *SII*, i, no. 24, verse, 5; no. 25 (36, 37) quoted in Chakravarty, op. cit , p. 20. Chakravarty wrongly ascribes the inscription to the sixth century.

[54] *Elements of Hindu Iconography* (Madras, 1914), i, pt. I, Intro., 55-58.

[55] J. N. Farquhor, op. cit , pp. 193-94

[56] T. Gopinath Rao, op. cit., p. 56.

[57] Ibid. p. 57

[58] M. Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, tr. R. C Pandeya [in Hindi] (Delhi, 1966), i, pt. 1, 246-48. Earlier we have indicated the place of the origin of the *Jayākhya Saṃhitā*. Schrader assigns the *Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā* to Kashmir, much later after the fourth century (Winternitz, op. cit., p. 247, fns. 1 & 2).

[59] This is based on chapter ix of Chakravarty, op. cit.

[60] B. Spooner and Hodgson hold such a view (Ibid. p. 47). James Needham suggests some connection between the erotic sensual element to Chinese ritualism and the tāntric religion of India, on the basis of which J. N. Banerjea (op. cit., p. 132) looks for Chinese influence in tāntric eroticism.

[61] A *History of Indian Literature* (Second edn, Calcutta University), i, pt, II, 531.

[62] D. K. Chakravarty, "The Antiquity and the Evolution of the Saptamātrka Worship in Bengal", *Proceedings of the Bhagalpur Session of the Indian History Congress* (1968), p. 129.

[63] Relevant references collected by N. N. Bhattacharya appear in D. C. Sircar, ed, *The Śakti Cult and Tārā*, pp. 68-69, 143-46.

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15

DEVANGANA DESAI

Art under Feudalism in India (*c.* A.D. 500-1300)

The period from *c.* A.D. 500 marks the beginning of a new age in Indian history when certain economic factors played a decisive role in paving the way for a new social and political structure based essentially on the land system. We need not go here into the details of the feudal system as this has been dealt with in other papers of this journal. We will be chiefly concerned here with the socio-cultural aspects of feudalism that influenced the function, nature and character of art in the period. The paper aims to show this influence mainly through the patron class, whose tastes and outlook, interests and demands, changed on account of change in the economic base of society. It attempts to study the treatment of art under feudal conditions and its place in the social values of the period.

Developments which appeared with the feudal mode of production, such as the gradual decline of trade, money economy and commodity production, the decay of urban centres, the rise of local units of production and the more or less self-sufficient village economy,[1] undermined the economic role and social status of the mercantile and commercial class of *śreṣṭhīs* (bankers) and *sārthavāhas* (caravan-leaders) and of the urban class or *nāgarakas* (cultured citizens). The economic, social

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and political position of a new class of *sāmantas*, *mahāsāmantas*, *rāṇakas*, *ṭhakkuras* and of various other feudal chiefs was strengthened. The number of feudal chiefs went on multiplying with the crystallization of feudalism after A.D. 650 and more so after A.D. 1000.[2] The ancient religious art at Bharhut, Sanchi, Karle, Kanheri, Junnar, Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda, etc., was patronized mainly by the mercantile and commercial class, artisan and craft guilds as well as the royal families. But the art of the period from *c.* A.D. 650 to 1300 was supported mainly by the kings of different principalities, feudatories, military chiefs, etc., who alone could own and donate land to religious institutions.

The rise of the Rajput chiefs, tracing their descent from the sun and the moon, was closely related to the feudal politico-economic structure. The military obligation in the feudal relationship and the granting of land and titles to chieftains were among the factors responsible for the rise of the Rajput clans.[3] They seem to be of mixed origin, possibly Hinduized foreigners—Hūṇas and Scythians—or Hinduized tribals—Gonds, Bhars, Kharwars, Bhils, etc.[4] Although their mixed or tribal origin has not yet been conclusively proved, it is certain that the Rajput princes and chiefs strove hard to glorify their families and roots. For being accorded a high status in the caste hierarchy they depended upon the support of the priest class, the brāhmaṇas, and their keenness in this regard led to the practice of extensive gifts (*dāna*) to the brāhmaṇas. The Purāṇas, the Smṛtis and other religious literature of the period duly recognize and embody in their behaviour pattern *ṣoḍaśa-mahādānas* (16 great gifts) which include *hiraṇyagarbha dāna*.[5] The donor, by the performance of the ceremony of his rebirth through *hiraṇyagarbha* (golden womb) and *dāna* to the officiating priests, could attain a high social status. Historical evidence supports the fact that the kings of the leading dynasties from the sixth century onwards performed these ceremonial *dānas*.[6] According to R.C. Hazra,[7] new topics in the Purāṇas from the sixth century A.D. onwards mainly relate to *dāna* to the brāhmaṇas and their worship, *tīrtha* (pilgrimage), sacrifices to the planets and their pacification, *vrata* (vow), *pūjā* (worship), etc. Agricultural and seasonal *utsavas* (festivals) and rites were revived under the Smārta-Paurāṇic religion. *Pūrtadharma*, which involved the building of temples, tanks and works of public utility, was emphasized as the highest mode of religion in the Purāṇas.[8] An increase in the importance of *pūrta* in the period cannot be gainsaid. In the Upaniṣads, for instance, *pūrta* was meant for fools who go to the lower worlds,[9] whereas *tapas* was the highest virtue. In the Paurāṇic literature on the other hand the merit accruing through temple-building was considered to be greater than that accruing through the performance of the Vedic sacrifices[10] *Pūrtadharma* was the dominant ideology behind the large-scale building of temples in this period.

Materially, the condition was ideal for extensive temple-building. Numerous landowning *sāmantas*, princes and kings of the period wanted to acquire *puṇya* (merit) and fame by building temples and donating land and villages for their maintenance. As R.S. Sharma observes, "There was no dearth of donations because not only the kings and queens but also princes and chiefs possessed their own villages and village folk whom they could dispose of freely."[11] Again, owing to obstructions in trade the surplus wealth of the feudatories and kings was not invested in it or in craft production but in conspicuous consumption[12] and the erection of bigger and bigger temples which would proclaim the glory of the patrons

Meanwhile, another development was taking place. The Smārta-Paurāṇic religion was influenced in its behavioural aspects, i.e., *pūjā* and *vidhis*, by the magical elements such as *maṇḍala, yantras, nyāsas, mantras.*[13] These magical elements soon became widespread through the patronage given by the feudal class to another powerful, though in its earlier stages less popular, religious movement known as tāntricism. From about the fifth century[14] tāntricism underwent changes in its esoteric and *aghori* (terrible) practices and from about the 10th century some of the tāntric sects, especially the Pāśupatas, were invited by kings of various regions such as Gujarat, Dāhala (in central India), Mysore, Orissa, Kashmir, etc., to head temple organization.[15] There was a general belief that *tāntrikas* had knowledge of *rasāyana* (alchemy) and *vājikaraṇa* (aphrodisiacs) and had gained mastery over magical lore—*ṣaṭkarma, vaśikaraṇa, stambhana*, etc. These *siddhis* (achievement) of tāntric *ācāryas* were considered useful by kings and feudal chiefs in serving their two dominant interests, war and sex. Hence the liberal patronage of the tāntric *ācāryas* by the feudal class. The thematic content of the art of the period A.D. 900-1300 was much influenced by tāntric beliefs and practices.

Art in the Gupta period (*c.* A.D. 320-650), when feudal tendencies had just begun to appear, reflects the vitality and zest of renewed brāhmaṇism which was associated with the emerging socio-economic structure and supported by the rising class of patrons. For the first time in the fourth-fifth centuries temples were constructed in permanent material, stone. This proved a landmark in the history of Indian architecture and would not have been possible without corresponding achievements in architectural methods and techniques. It was also in this period, when artistic techniques and tools were perfected in respect of plastic modelling and from the point of view of visual perception, that sculpture attained a "classical" quality. Progress in technology was combined with lively developments in the field of philosophy (Mahāyāna Buddhism and Yoga), which gave spiritual content to sculpture, as for example in the Buddha images of Sarnath or the Ekamukhī-liṅga of Khoh. On the other hand local ethnic influence and the ideology of neo-brāhmaṇism were reflected in the sculptured reliefs of Kosam, Deograh, Besnagar, Pawaya, etc. As Niharranjan Ray puts it, ". . they are much less elegant and spiritual, much less refined and luminous, than the products of the Sārnāth School, but more homely and more intimate which is perhaps due to a closer relation with day-to-day life".[16] This trend is vividly reflected in the monumental sculptures of Udayagiri near Ujjain, the seat of Gupta power.

Although the seeds of decline were present in the economy of the Gupta period, commercial prosperity continued until the end of the fifth century. In the fourth-fifth centuries Vātsyāyana made *nāgarakas* (and not *sāmantas*) the centre of his *Kāmasūtra*, although in his time forced labour and other feudal elements had appeared at the village level.[17] It is this transitional period when the upper classes became richer than before which saw the highest flowering of literature and the visual arts—sculpture, painting and terracottas. The arts patronized by the rich (both the old commercial class and the new feudal lords) reflect aristocratic tastes in their embelishment and in the dignified countenance and elaborate coiffures of both male and female figures. The aristocratic lovers of Badami, Ajanta, Ellora, Deogarh, Nachna, etc., indulging in *madhupāna* (drinking of wine) or enjoying music and dance, attended by women with *chauris* or wine jars, certainly betray the feudal outlook of the age. Commenting on the art of Ajanta, Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy very aptly says:

> Despite its invariable religious subject-matter, this is an art of "great courts charming the mind by their noble routine"; adorned with *alamkāras* and well-acquainted with *bhāvabheda*. The *Harṣacarita*, *Kādambarī*, and the works of Kālidāsa and other classic Sanskrit dramatists, and the later Ajantā paintings all reflect the same phase of luxurious aristocratic culture.[18]

After the death of Harṣa in A.D. 647 political disintegration gave rise to numerous petty states in north India. The collection and consumption of the surplus by the ruling class became more and more diffused and localized. Temples were richly endowed and numerous local centres of art grew up in the period A.D. 650-900, when feudal tendencies were ascendant. The "classical" idiom was now interpreted in terms of the varied local ethnic-cultural background. Local themes and visions predominated the art of this period, though its all-India tradition persisted. The temples at Bhubaneswar in Orissa, Osia in Rajasthan, Aihole and Pattadakal near Dharwar indicate new experiments in the ground plans, *śikhara* designs, etc. A beginning was made in establishing temples according to regional patterns. In sculpture the images project the emotional experience and ideology of the time and place. Thus the tāntric atmosphere pervades the figures of dancers in the Paraśurāmeśvara temple and the fierce forms of gods and goddesses in the Vaitāla temple at Bhubaneswar. In the rock-cut sculptures of Ellora (seventh-eighth centuries) one can feel the fighting mood of the divinities engaged in violent struggles against their enemies.[19] The myths embodied in the Purāṇas and the epics provide new themes.

The art of the period A.D. 900-1300 reflects the cultural impact of feudalism more clearly than that of the preceding periods. Feudal and regional tendencies reached their climax in this period. The feudal atmosphere encouraged traditionalism and conventionalism. Canons of *śilpa* and painting were written in textual form from the late Gupta period onwards. The Purāṇas such as the *Viṣṇudharmottara*, *Agni*, *Matsya*, etc., also had chapters on *vāstu* and *śilpa*. The artisans were expected to follow strict canonical dictates as regards the choice of the site, design and construction of the shrine, carving of the images, etc. From about the 10th century art was governed mainly by the canons of various regional schools.[20] Significantly, temple architecture reached its perfection despite these limitations. The Kandariya Mahādeva temple built at Khajuraho in central India in A.D. 1025-50 represents the highest achievement of the Nāgara style of Jejākabhukti school. The Lingarāja temple erected about A.D. 1060 at Bhubaneswar is among the best examples of the Orissa school, the other being the Sūrya temple at Konarak built about A.D. 1250. Similarly, the Nīlakaṇṭheśvara temple at Udayapur built in the middle of the 11th century is a good example of the Malwa school. Each regional school, though influenced to a certain extent by extraneous trends, exhibited a fixed architectural conception and structural design, and variations were possible only within this framework.

Sculptural motifs were thoroughly subordinated to the regional architectural pattern. I will briefly cite here from my empirical survey of one of the sculptural motifs—the erotic motif—to show how regional patterns had conditioned its depiction in medieval art.[21] The erotic motif was originally a fertility symbol and considered to be auspicious in early art tradition; it was accepted in the art of temples as an auspicious *alamkāra*, magico-religious in function. But its place and assignment in the temple's architectural scheme was determined by the respective regional schools. For instance, the Jejākabhukti school (Khajuraho) and the Orissa school permitted it on the *jaṅghā*, the main wall of the temple. The size of the motif was in its turn determined by its assignment in the architectural scheme. In the temples of the above two schools the motif could be large and distinctly visible to pilgrims. In the temples of Gujarat and Mysore on the other hand the erotic motif could never be portrayed on the *jaṅghā*. In the Mysore temples of the Hoysaḷa school it is invariably confined to the *kakṣāsana* (the sloping balustrade of the balcony) and to a small decorative band on the basement, whereas in the Gujarat temples it is generally shown on the *kakṣāsana*, *narathara* row on the plinth, *kumbha* row above the plinth, on pillars and on lintels. Though often more obscene than those of the Orissa and Khajuraho temples, erotic figures of Mysore and Gujarat escape the notice of pilgrims. The thematic content or type of relationship portrayed in the motif is also to some extent determined by the regional pattern.

Numerous figures appear on the surface on the temple, but their grouping is thoroughly disintegrated. They "are juxtaposed in relation to space but are not inherently related with one another by psychological and narrative ties".[22] Animals, vegetal and abstract designs and even human figures had their role in temple art as merely decorative figures, *alaṃkāras*. This reminds us of Arnold Hauser's observations on European feudal art:

> Not only the animals and the foliage but also the human figures fulfil an ornamental function in the total pattern of the church; according to the space to be filled up, they are bent and twisted, stretched or reduced in size. The subservient role of the detail is emphasized so strongly that the frontier between free and applied art, between sculpture and mere decoration, remains fluid.[23]

Medieval art of India presents human figures, especially female forms, in all their different attitudes and bodily contortions, but they do not have any sculptural individuality, except perhaps for a few examples at Konarak. There are, of course, a few good female figures known as *surasundarīs* at Jagat in Rajasthan and in some of the early temples at Khajuraho and Bhubaneswar, but these also are part of the architectural scheme. Sculpture gets prominence in the Hoysa*l*a temples of Mysore and architecture becomes sculptural, but here ornateness carried to its baroque extreme results in lifeless sculptures with the forms being devoid of vitality.

The female figures represent *nāyikās* in their different emotional moods (*bhāvas*) of *abhisārikā* or *vāsakasajjikā* (decorating herself for meeting her lover). These, however, are not *nāyikās* of such ancient poets as Hāla and Amaru whose poetic imagery is reflected in the older art of Nagarjunkonda, but are frozen *nāyikās* who follow the dictums of Śāstras. They do not move us. The portrayal of tāntric *ācāryas* in relations with women and often in aristocratic company fascinated the feudal patrons to such an extent that almost all the temples that portray erotic motifs after A.D. 900 have this theme in their art. War scenes and hunting parties also appear in temples, but these are confined to smaller rows of sculpture. Portrait sculpture was not much prevalent in early Indian history except under the Kuṣānas. In the medieval period, however, we have sculptured reliefs depicting kings, possibly donors. Thus the king is shown sitting in his court in the Belur temple and giving *dāna*, practising archery, sitting in the swing amidst harem women, etc., in the Konarak temple. Here the royal figure is invariably shown big and the rest of the figures decreasing in size according to their hierarchical position. More gods and goddesses appear in art. But they are not simple forms of Śiva as Naṭarāja or Devī as Mahiśāsuramardinī of the earlier art. The new gods and goddesses were connected with the numerous tāntric cults that were coming to the fore and had their iconography in the *dhyānamantras* of tāntric texts. Their visual forms had to conform to rigid iconographical formulae. Even the slightest variation would result in the loss of the magical efficacy of the icon. Canonization bacame the rule.

The result is the ossification of form and spirit. With increasing demand for sculptural decoration the quality further deteriorated. Referring to the cult images, Niharranjan Ray writes:

> A procession of endless monotony of form, uninformed by any inner experience and without any registration of individual creative genius, meets the eye. It is only in rare instances that images were expressions of the artist's creative genius and attained high artistic standards. But such examples are few and far between.[24]

This is also true of non-iconic figure sculptures which were more or less standardized according to regional patterns

The medieval conception of form changes from the fully rounded plasticity of classical Indian sculpture to "summarising the rounded volume in the direction of flat surface and linear angles;...compositions tend to become linearised with emphasis on sharp angles, horizontals, verticals, and diagonals."[25] This trend is, however, not seen consistently in all regions at the same time. But sooner or later medieval art moves in this direction and by about the 12th-13th centuries the artistic creativity is completely exhausted in most of the art-regions except in Orissa where it flickers for some time in the grand temple at Konarak. In the Deccan, which had produced the great art of Ellora and Elephanta in the feudal period, art shows signs of decadence except perhaps in an isolated example of the Ambernath temple near Bombay erected in A.D. 1060, which has some fine sculptures. The Gondeśvara temple at Sinnar built by a feudatory chief in the 12th century is a clear example of the relative superiority of architecture to sculpture. In the Gujarat school ornateness was indulged in to its extreme. This is evident from the supposedly good temple at Modhera, built in A.D. 1027 immediately after the devastating raid of Maḥmūd of Ghaznī and the 13th-century fort wall at Dabhoi near Baroda. The very notion of decorating the fort wall, the function of which is to protect and guard the town, was indeed of feudal taste and origin. Even the tanks and wells were ornately decorated by the royal family of Gujarat.

Kings of numerous principalities lived in the world of artificial greatness and exalted titles. Bards and court-poets sang the invented glory of their patrons in bombastic words, describing the king as the ideal hero. To satisfy their inflated ego and the appetite for fame and glory the aristocratic and royal families of the period competed with each other in building large and magnificent temples. Every king or chieftain wanted to excel his ancestor or neighbour in this regard. It is said that the Ganga king Narasimhadeva I, who built the majestic temple of Konarak, aimed at building a temple surpassing in height the great temple at Puri. In its construction he spent 12 years' revenue. In keeping with the spirit of the times, inscriptions generally use figurative expression in describing the temples. The Khajuraho inscription of the Lakṣmaṇa temple, built in A.D. 954, says that Yaśovarman Candella, who was then a mere feudatory of the Pratihāras and not even an independent ruler, "erected this charming splendid home (of Viṣṇu)...which rivals the peaks of the mountains of snow, the golden pinnacles of which illumine the sky".[26] The Gurgi inscription from the Cedi territory notes the erection of a Śiva temple "which aspired to be as high as the peak of the Sumeru mountain, was famous on the earth, caused wonder in the three worlds and acted like a staircase to his (donor's) fame marching towards heaven."[27] The Ittagi (Mysore) inscription of the 12th century refers to a feudal chief building a temple which was the *cakravartin*[28] among temples.

The large number of villages donated to the temple, "the house and body of god", by royal and aristocratic families converted it into a wealthy feudal organization[29] wielding considerable influence in economic and social life. According to the *Prabandhacintāmaṇi*,[30] the heads of temples demanded certain luxuries from the donors, and probably their tastes and demands were taken into consideration in the construction and decoration of temples. The god himself was treated as a *ṭhakkura*, especially in eastern India, and was provided with a *bhogamaṇḍapa* (hall for offerings) and a *naṭamaṇḍapa* (hall for dance). With these new accessories the temple further increased in size and proportion and rivalled the palaces of kings and feudatories, proud descriptions of which are available, though the monuments have perished, in the *Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra*, *Mānasāra*, *Mānasollāsa*, etc.

The function of art in feudal society was to impress and dazzle the audience or the onlooker and to proclaim the glory, might and riches of opulent patrons. Though apparently in the service of religion, it was actually the means of gratifying their aspirations for fame and glory. Art succeeded in this function of glorification and therefore failed in conveying higher qualities, feelings and values.

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[2] *IF*, ch. V; B.P. Mazumdar, *The Socio-Economic History of Northern India*, (Calcutta, 1960), pp. 9, 11.

[3] R. Thapar, op. cit., p. 243.

[4] V. Smith, *The Early History of India*, 3rd edn (Oxford, 1914), pp. 340-1, 428; H. H. Risley, *The People of India* (Calcutta, 1915), p. xx; W. Crooke, ed, *Tod's Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, i, (Oxford, 1920), xxxi.

[5] *Matsya P.*, 275. 1-23; D C. Sircar, *Studies in the Religious Life of Ancient and Medieval India* (Delhi, 1971), p. 164ff. *Dāna* was glorified as an important way to piety in the Kali age.

[6] D. C. Sircar, op. cit., D. D. Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (Bombay, 1956), p. 295.

[7] *Studies in the Purāṇic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs* (Dacca, 1940), p. 189.

[8] *vāpīkūpataḍāgāni devāyatanāni ca*
annapradānamārāmāḥ pūrtadharma ca muktidam, *Agni P.*, 209.2; *Varāha P.*, 172. 33; *Mārkaṇḍeya P.*, 16. 123-4; *Skanda P.*, 10. 2, 10; P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra* v, pt ii (Poona, 1962), 947ff.

[9] *Mnṇḍaka Up.*, i, 2, 10-1.

[10] *Agni P.*, ch. 38.

[11] *IF*, p. 59.

[12] R. Thapar, op. cit., p. 244; B. P. Mazumdar in *Land System and Feudalism in Ancient India*, ed, D. C. Sircar (Calcutta University, 1966), p. 71.

[13] R. C. Hazra, op. cit., p. 260; P. V. Kane, op. cit., pp. 1031, 1095.

[14] Gangdhar inscription of the first quarter of the fifth century A. D. refers to tantra and *ḍākinīs*, *CII*, ii, 3rd edn (Varanasi, 1970), 76.

[15] I have dealt with the spread of tāntric sects in different regions of India in my forthcoming book, *Erotic Sculpture of India in Its Socio-Cultural Setting*, chapter VII (Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Co., New Delhi).

[16] Section on "Sculpture", *The Classical Age*, 2nd edn (Bombay, 1962), p. 526.

[17] ed, G. D. Shastri (Banaras, 1929), v.v. 5.

[18] *History of Indian and Indonesian Art* (Delhi Reprint. 1972), p. 90 and. fn.

[19] N. Ray, *Idea and Image in Indian Art* (Delhi, 1973), p. 83ff.

[20] Stella Kramrisch (*Art of India*, 3rd edn, London, 1965, p. 44) refers to regional schools between the ninth and 13th centuries.

[21] D. J. Desai, op. cit., chs. IV, V.

[22] N. Ray, Section on "Sculpture" in *The Struggle For Empire* (Bombay, 1957), p. 645.

[23] *The Social History of Art* (London, 1962), p. 169.

[24] Section on "Sculpture" in *The Struggle for Empire*, p. 643.

[25] Ibid. p. 641.

[26] *EI*, i, 134, verse 42.

[27] Ibid. xxii, 133, verse 11.

[28] Ibid. xiii, 56.

[29] R. S. Sharma, *Light on Early Indian Society and Economy*, p. 150; Buddha Prakash, *Aspects of Indian History and Civilization* (1965), p. 225.

[30] (Asiatic Society, Calcutta, 1901), p. 26.

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